THE Hudson REVIEW

E. M. CIORAN:
Valery Before His Idols

W. H. AUDEN:
Valery: L'Homme d'esprit

DANIEL CURLEY:
Where You Wouldn't Want to Walk—a story

ULLI BEIER:
Contemporary Art in New Guinea

RAYMOND DURGNAT:
Symbolism and the Underground

Poems by DANIEL HOFFMAN, PHILIP LEVINE, WENDELL BERRY, JYOTIRMOY DATTA.

Articles and Reviews by GEORGE SCOTT-MONCRIEFF, HERBERT LEIBOWITZ, JOYCE CAROL OATES, MARVIN MUDRICK, ROGER SALE, JAMES P. DEGNAN, ZULFIKAR GHOSE, BERNARD BERGONZI.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAN 5 1970

The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge

General Editor: **Kathleen Coburn.**
Associate Editor: **Bart Winer.**

Coleridge was one of the two great seminal minds of his age. Yet, except for an incomplete attempt more than a century ago, there has been no collected edition of his works. The Collected Works, comprising sixteen titles in about twenty-four volumes, will assemble all of his known writings in prose and verse, except for the letters and notebooks which are being published separately. Some titles will be published from manuscript for the first time.
Bollingen Series LXXV

The first work of this literary monument is now available

4: THE FRIEND

Editor: **Barbara E. Rooke.** Published originally as a periodical in 1809-1810, **The Friend** is best described by its subtitle "A Series of Essays... to Aid in the Formation of Fixed Principles in Politics, Morals, and Religion, with Literary Amusements Interspersed." Illustrated, indexed, in two volumes, boxed. $20.00

sponsored by
Bollingen Foundation

published by
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editor:

FREDERICK MORGAN

Managing Editor:

IRENE SKOLNICK

Editorial Board:

JOSEPH BENNETT
MARY EMMA ELLIOTT
ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS
MARIUS BEWLEY

Associate Editors:

EDMUND T. DELANEY
PAULA DEITZ

Editorial Assistant:

CHARLOTTE WIGGERS

Contributing Editors:

B. H. HAGGIN, *Music and Ballet*
JOHN SIMON, *Theatre*
VERNON YOUNG, *Film*

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index.

Subscription $5.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $5.50. Single copy $1.50. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XX available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003. Microfilms of Volumes I—XX available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Printing office: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23205. Second Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia.

Registered U. S. Patent Office.

Copyright © 1969 by The Hudson Review, Inc

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME XXII
NUMBER 3
AUTUMN 1969

THE Hudson Review

Articles

Valéry Before His Idols — E. M. CIORAN — 411
Valéry: L'Homme d'esprit — W. H. AUDEN — 425
Symbolism and the Underground — RAYMOND DURGNAT — 457

Story

Where You Wouldn't Want to Walk — DANIEL CURLEY — 442

Poems

Thistles, PHILIP LEVINE, 403; Broken Laws; A Waking; Over the Rim; A New Notebook, DANIEL HOFFMAN, 433; Letter from America; Journey into Space; In the Image of the Gods, JYOTIRMOY DATTA, 449; Song in a Year of Catastrophe; The Current; A Standing Ground; The Slopes of Waban, WENDELL BERRY, 452.

Chronicles

Before the Revolution — STEPHEN FARBER — 469
Contemporary Art in New Guinea — ULLI BEIER — 477
Music and Ballet — B. H. HAGGIN — 487

Reports

Ghose's London: A Valediction — ZULFIKAR GHOSE — 374
Letter from Scotland — GEORGE SCOTT-MONCRIEFF — 388
Joyce Week in Dublin — J. MITCHELL MORSE — 395

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

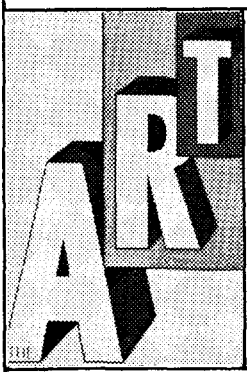
The Muse and the News	HERBERT LEIBOWITZ	497
Black Cartesian	BERNARD BERGONZI	508
Socialist Camp: a Style of Radical Wistfulness	VERNON YOUNG	513
The Art of Hugh Kenner	ROGER SALE	521
The Swiss Chard Caper	JAMES P. DEGNAN	527
Fiction Chronicle	JOYCE CAROL OATES	531
Analyzing Jazz	WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN	540
The End of the World or Else	MARVIN MUDRICK	551

Notes on Contributors 387

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New in paper from Dutton

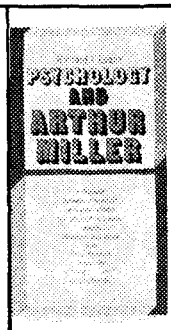
THE TRIQUARTERLY ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE
Translations by Gregory Rabassa and Clayton Eshleman, among others
This expanded version includes works by Fuentes, Cortazar, Borges, Asturias, Neruda, Vallejo, Paz, and more.
Paper D251 $3.95



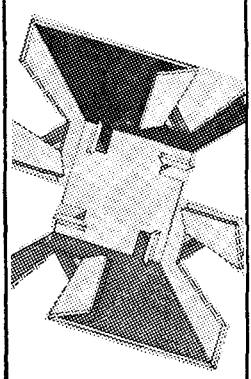
THE ART OF TIME
Essays on the Avant-Garde
by Michael Kirby
A vital and exciting exploration of the newest directions in American art.
Paper D241 $1.95

MODERN SPANISH THEATRE
An Anthology of Plays
Edited by Michael Benedikt and George E. Wellwarth
This unique collection of twentieth-century plays involved with fantastic questions and pressing political realities, represents Spain's contemporary renaissance in drama.
Paper D236 $2.95

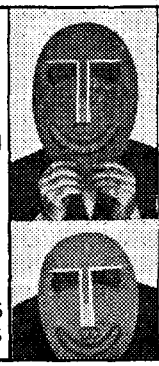
PSYCHOLOGY AND ARTHUR MILLER
by Richard I. Evans
A dialogue between playwright and psychologist in which they disclose how a writer creates, character motivation and play structure, and the writer in society.
Paper D237 $1.75



BLAKE'S JOB
by S. Foster Damon
William Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, containing twenty-two strikingly beautiful engravings that are fully explicated and related to Blake's philosophy by Professor Damon.
Paper D247 $1.75



COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS
A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind
by Richard M. Bucke
Reviews the mental and spiritual activity of the human race and discusses people who have been gifted with the power of illumination.
Paper D245 $2.95



TOTAL THEATRE
A Critical Anthology
Edited by E. T. Kirby
Elucidates the basic principles and techniques that will contribute to the creation of the theatre of the future.
Paper D240 $2.45

dutton

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reports

Ghose's London: A Valediction

A MAN DEPARTING FROM A PLACE he might not see again for a long time looks for the memorable images. We're seekers after intensities. Oh, cries the damnably romantic soul, let the memory have its store of ecstasy! Something to illumine the dark days by, something to preoccupy the spirit. Thus I, in my eighteenth year in London, about to leave it for a teaching post in America, find the city to be a kind of mistress whom I'm determined to leave and yet to whose arms I repeatedly, obsessively return. What was it Antony said about his Egyptian fetters? And Wilde was wrong. We don't kill the thing we love; it kills us. I love London as I love cigarettes.

The London I leave after the best part of two decades is very different from the London I came to wearing my father's double-breasted suit in which he went to America in the thirties. That gloomy bomb-damaged London projects its dated images in my mind like a non-stop performance of old movies while I look at the present concrete-and-glass, Hilton-and-the-Post-Office-Tower London. The ruined sites, the empty spaces where kids played bang-bang-you're-dead games have vanished, and were it not for the Englishman's veneration of parks, trees and flowers and his loathing of apartments as opposed to the geraniums-at-the-window, semi-detached, suburban, redbrick or pebbledash rendered two-storey house, then there would be nothing to stop the towers of property speculation rising to construct the walls of claustrophobia and profit.

The fifties and sixties were a time of an accelerating technological revolution, of the horse finally relinquishing his services for all but the decorative, anachronistic state occasions—which latter must be the most poignant images taken back by touring American home-movie enthusiasts with which to spread the myth among their credulous neighbours that Britain is a country of tradition and ceremony. These two decades were the ones in which Britain narrowed her political frontiers, gradually dissolving her Empire. It was a time in which the old-established respect for such institutions as the monarchy and parliament began to decline. Did not Harold Wilson say that he was the most abused Prime Minister of the century? What he failed to realize is that the abuse he personally experienced would have been hurled at any other man in his office, that it was a symptom of the time, of a mood of disenchantment with things important and holy. Until the sixties, democracy had been a concept true more in theory than in practice, for rigid class and economic structures within the society had kept the worker at work while the priv-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new books on Russian Literature

LITERATURE AND REVOLUTION
A Critical Study of the Writer and Communism in the Twentieth Century

JURGEN RUHLE • Translated and edited by Jean Steinberg

After World War I, many writers turned to Russia in the hope of a new and better world. But, with Stalin's ascent to power, the outbreak of another savage war, and the imposition of Soviet rule on conquered countries, hope changed to fear. In this brilliant study, Jurgen Ruhle, a noted German political commentator and literary critic, examines the work of such writers as Pasternak, Brecht, Mann, Gorky, Sholokhov, Silone, Malraux, Hemingway, Neruda, Lorca, and Tagore. An invaluable discussion of the relationship between totalitarianism and the writer. "A major critical feat . . . indispensable."—Library Journal. 488 pp., bibliog., index. $12.50

RUSSIA'S UNDERGROUND POETS

Edited by **KEITH BOSLEY** • Introduction by Janis Sapiets

During the past forty years, Soviet writers have been faced with a clearly defined choice: to conform and be accepted or to rebel and become outcasts. Those who are convinced that they are the true heirs to Russia's artistic legacy publish their works at home and abroad in defiance of all attempts to stop them. The poems in this volume, selected from a variety of underground publications, celebrate life rather than Socialist Realism. The forty-one poets represented—including Pasternak, Okudzhava, Slutsky, Akhmadulina, and Brodsky—can be admired for their work and for their stubborn courage. 120 pp. $4.95

MOTHER EARTH AND OTHER STORIES

BORIS PILNYAK

Translated from the Russian and edited by Vera T. Reck and Michael Green

A selection of novellas and short stories by the Russian proletarian writer of the mid-twenties, who perished when he expressed doubts about the aftermath of the Revolution. "Excellently edited and beautifully translated . . . gives the reader, for the first time in English, a remarkably clear idea about the strength and depth of an exceptionally gifted writer."—Saturday Review. 312 pp. $6.95

PRAEGER PUBLISHERS
111 Fourth Avenue/New York 10003

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ileged elite sent its sons to rule the Empire. With the sixties came universal affluence, processed foods, the pill, shorter hours of work; with the sixties came the kind of emancipation the English as a race had never before experienced. It was a time when youth became a cult and sycophancy towards youth one more nauseating trait acquired by the mass media. A new hedonism set in, encouraged by the colour supplements, themselves a novelty. London became the centre of European fashion and Carnaby Street became a cliché for a certain type of sartorial gaudiness. In 1952 the Comet took to the skies, in 1969 the Concorde. England won the football world cup in 1966 and the pound was devalued two years later. If the skyline changed, so did the people who walked at street level. These were the decades, too, when large-scale immigration literally changed the colour of the British scene. Commercial television came in and the B.B.C. Third Programme reduced its number of broadcasting hours. Personal affluence came to be taken for granted along with continuing economic strife at the national level. The satire boom left nothing sacred and at first refreshingly took the stuffiness out of the air, but then filled the vacuum with its own degeneration. The Beatles, David Frost, Twiggy and Mary Quant became heroes and myths and, finally, vast industries. A garish patriotism backed Britain, making the Union Jack a jolly pattern to print on carrier-bags and chamber-pots, while imports continued to increase. The standard of living rose, the standard of the culture declined.

London, of course, was not unique in having such revolutionary changes inflicted upon it, for these were the years in which television came to Europe, reducing all human preoccupations to a belittling mass appeal, restricting whatever horizons tempted human vision, and complacently emphasizing the principle that civilization is ultimately a process of eliminating individuality from people and places. The new utilitarian formula proposed bringing the greatest number of package deals to the greatest number of "consumers" (I almost wrote "people"). London, like Paris or Amsterdam or Berlin, or whichever segment of the same metropolitan mosaic I looked at, became a culture which began to smell of polythene. And the situation of the writer, *my* situation at any rate, became more and more that of one who has unwittingly put his head in a polythene bag and begun to suffocate.

In theatre and in poetry, the two arts which interest me the most, it is a time when the mediocre, the ephemeral, the modish, the shallow, and the intellectually worthless is praised above any work of quality. The work which suggests a parallel with some aspect of contemporary life is considered socially significant and therefore good. Such is the current critical reasoning. It's a culture run by oafs.

A play having a most unmerited successful run in Shaftesbury Avenue exemplifies two points about contemporary England. Alan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Literary Studies From Kentucky

THE ART OF JOHN DRYDEN

Paul Ramsey

An examination of Dryden's versification and structure. His metrical accomplishments rank him among the best poets in the language. This book won the 1968 Award of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. $6.50

MARK TWAIN AND THE BIBLE

Allison Ensor

A full examination of Twain's familiarity with and extensive use of the Bible, suggesting the derivation of three important recurring images. $4.75

CHATEAUBRIAND'S TRAVELS IN AMERICA

Richard Switzer, Translator and Editor

The first modern translation of an important work. $7.95

GREEN HILLS OF MAGIC

West Virginia Folktales from Europe

Ruth Ann Musick

Entertaining stories which are excellent examples of the diverse folk beliefs and cultural patterns of immigrant groups. $7.50

THE NOVEL AS AMERICAN SOCIAL HISTORY

A New Publishing Program

The press will reissue important novels published from the 1880's through the 1920's. Each reflects a major aspect of the changing America of that time, and is introduced and evaluated by a distinguished historian. Publication of the sixteen initial titles will begin in 1970, with more in preparation. Cloth editions will be $6.50 and paper will be $1.95. *Please send for a descriptive brochure.*

The University Press of Kentucky **Lexington, 40506**

The University Press of Kentucky has been formed by the cooperative efforts of nine public and private colleges and universities. Successor to the University of Kentucky Press, it will have substantially expanded publishing facilities to serve the scholarly community, and will enlarge its editorial interests with a vigorous acquisitions program in several disciplines. It welcomes inquiries from scholars about its facilities and publishing programs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bennett's *40 Years On* looks back on England by involving the teachers and pupils at a school in a play within the play. It looks back nostalgically, exciting much sentimental palpitation about the two wars, and records distress at the changed scene. Bennett and his principal actor, Sir John Gielgud (surely the most over-praised ham actor in the business), don't realise that *40 Years On* is itself a symptom of the decline when its own utter worthlessness as art is nightly applauded by full houses. When jokes on the level of "I wish I could lay my hands on the choir's parts" are considered the height of wit, then I have nothing in common with the culture they represent. I don't mind a third-rate dramatist enjoying commercial success; what I do resent and find execrable is the notion given common currency by London's taste-makers that such immature intellect as that revealed in *40 Years On* is to be considered a high level of creative achievement.

It might be said that Bennett is a harmless middlebrow entertainer; well, let's turn to an accredited highbrow, Harold Pinter. The Royal Shakespeare Company in London put on two of his short plays, *Landscape* and *Silence,* this summer. It must be, in terms of words spoken per pence paid, the most expensive visit to the theatre in London. *Landscape* has two characters, named Beth and Duff in the programme though one never hears their names on the stage. She reminisces about being on a beach alone with a man, probably Duff, wanting a child from him while all he did was sleep. He talks of the trivalities of his present—sheltering from rain, going to a pub, and, climatically, wanting to assault her sexually in the hall. The two monologues never meet, the two lives never meet, and yet each seems to have wanted the same conjunction. Her memory is erotic, romantic; his present is mundane, coarse.

Silence has three characters, Rumsey, Ellen, and Bates. Again, the characters are seated, each apparently totally isolated from the others. Two of them rise a couple of times, but that is not in itself significant. Ellen is moved only by the memory of walking under the wind and the sun. Bates (it could be Rumsey, one never hears their names) brightens at the thought of a horse. Rumsey (it could be Bates; come to think of it, it could even have been Vladimir or Estragon or Murphy or Molloy or Malone or Watt) remembers the girl in grey. Three monologues, no connection. Long pauses. The memories are repeated. Long pauses are repeated. The three shadows projected on the grey sky gradually disperse like a jet's vapour-trail until they disappear completely. If there is any symbolism in the wind and the horse, it is a trite one. If there is any philosophical significance in the idea of loss of contact among people, it is a banal one. A forced intensity prevails in both *Silence* and *Landscape.*

It's easy for respectful and overawed critics to discover a contemporary significance in these plays; and I suppose the most difficult

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The University of Windsor Review

An International Biannual Publication of the Arts and Sciences

Past contributions include:

Essays by Hugh Kenner, Marshall McLuhan, Jerome Mazzaro, Dabney Stuart, and others

Fiction and Poetry by Daniel Stern, Eugene McNamara, Joyce Carol Oates, George Bowering, Daniel Hughes, Larry Rubin, and others

Critical essays on Joseph Conrad, Herbert Marcuse, William Faulkner, James Joyce, Robert Lowell, Malcolm Lowry, Vladimir Nabokov, and Canadian Art

Contributions are welcomed. Manuscripts submitted for consideration must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Address all correspondence to: The Editor, The University of Windsor Review, the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario Canada.

Subscription rates: $2.50 yearly plus 20¢ postage

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

judgement for journalistic critics to express must be the one which seemingly excludes them from the avant-garde elite: for, as fashionable London taste goes, not to perceive intellectual profundity in Pinter is to have doubts cast on one's own intellect. I thought that *Silence* and *Landscape* might have had the interest of novelty had Beckett never written anything for the stage. They merely confirm the conviction I've had that Pinter's is a very minor talent suitable only for the see-it and forget-it medium of television. I insist on demanding that the theatre give me a language which is memorable and a physical disposition of human images which excites my senses. I grant that Pinter's people and language are both real, that a metaphorical meaning can be ascribed to his situations; all I'm saying is that the people are dull, their discourse a bore, and the meaning so intellectually empty that it's not worth stating in the first place. And don't anyone, please, give me the usual humbug about the human condition. Let me remind you that the greatest Beckettian character was created by Shakespeare: Edgar in *King Lear*.

Yet Pinter's is the first name mentioned when people talk of the thriving London theatre, adding the names of Osborne, Wesker and Arden. Wesker, happily, has not inflicted anything on us recently. Arden I find naive and, fortunately, he too has lately spared the West End his presence. But Osborne, intellectually the vaguest of the lot, rants on and on. His *Hotel in Amsterdam,* seen earlier this year, was typical of the kind of play which may be called the drama of reminiscence. A group of people, brought together for some reason, dredge up their portentous past and proceed to accuse one another of treachery, callousness and just about any psychological evil you care to name. London saw two American examples of such drama: Albee's *A Delicate Balance* and Miller's *The Price*. It's as if every playwright were a disciple of Ibsen and television did not weekly show plays in which people sit round a room, pour themselves drinks, light cigarettes, have hysterics, suffer from sexual problems, have family quarrels and reconciliations, and generally get on one another's nerves. At about the same time that I was being bored to a Yeatsian frenzy by these plays—I just don't have any sympathy for people's overdramatized "problems"—I saw a revival of Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. It was like going to sleep in sooty Stoke-on-Trent and waking up amidst the Georgian elegance of Bath. The problem of using ordinary everyday speech without using ordinary everyday clichés has never been solved by Messrs Pinter, Osborne and Albee; it was by Eliot. From this I derive the moral that it requires a poet to order language to meet the demands of drama; for drama, like poetry, requires that experience be condensed and, therefore, that language work much harder than in an extended prose work. I don't believe that any playwright who has not been a poet has been an important playwright. It's true that major poets have written emi-

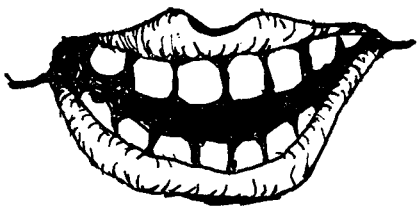
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AN
IN EAR
BARTRAM'S
TREE

by JONATHAN WILLIAMS $7.50

An Air-Express Collect, Fifty-Pound Watermelon
For Senator James O. Eastland

smile, Mr. Jim,
I want to see those false teeth
smile



clear to the far side
of Tampa Bay,

boy

I don't want to see nuthin
but elbows and assholes,

jowls, sow belly, and one dead
panatella

I want to see it *all,*
in tall cotton!

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nent rubbish for the stage—e.g., Shelley and Browning—and that some modern essays in verse drama have led to a phoney stylization of speech—e.g., Christopher Fry—but even more stylized rubbish has been written by the prosey Pinters and Osbornes. The two really worthwhile dramatists of the last hundred years, Ibsen and Brecht, were also poets.

There were two Brecht plays in England this summer, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at Chichester, and *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* in the West End. The Festival Theatre at Chichester, in the heart of Sussex, must be the only theatre in the world where one can come out in the interval and go for a walk up a gentle hill and lie under an elm before the trumpets summon one back to the play. If the gods ever need a terrestrial stage for their silly antics, an arcadian place where they can peacefully get on with their favourite task of devising methods of war against mortals, then surely they'd choose Chichester. Peter Coe's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was a considerable imaginative feat, brisk when the story needed advancing and gracefully slow when the play offered emotive scope. Topol's energetic and acrobatic Azdak, however, lacked in necessary subtlety, and Heather Sears appeared mournful rather than longsuffering as Grusha. Highly polished though the production was, it compared unfavourably with the Aldwych's production of the same play some years ago.

One sees the *Chalk Circle* and *Mother Courage* more often than any of Brecht's other plays. *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui,* in which Leonard Rossiter's performance as Ui is one of the funniest things on in London at present, describes through simple expressionistic sketches the rise of a gangster in Chicago, and builds up a parallel with the rise of Hitler, showing how easy it is for an absolute thug, lacking even a talent for thuggery, to acquire power. It's not clear whether it was Brecht or his present producer, Michael Blakemore, who insists on emphasizing the parallel from the beginning. I rather suspect Mr Blakemore, though it's a kind of fundamental fault which Brecht could have fallen into in his enthusiasm to draw a moral. There are moments when Brecht is simple to the point of being a simpleton; he's so consciously a moralist that he's prepared to let his writing degenerate whenever the didactic purpose has to be served. And it's an interesting comment on the uselessness of literature as propaganda that some of Brecht's best work is savagely against the capitalist West and that it is the West which performs him and applauds him generously. Ironically, the privileged people who can afford to drive down to Chichester, dine at the theatre's excellent Danish restaurant, and see Brecht ennoble the peasantry and denounce the aristocracy, are the very people who are the target of Brecht's attack. Still, it's not for his didacticism that one goes to Brecht. It's because he's the last of the playwrights who has used the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NORTON

The poetry of

Adrienne Rich

LEAFLETS

"Poems of nothing less than the greatest of revolutions: of being reborn to new vision, new feelings, new senses of both the changing world and one's changing self. . . . Some of the best poems now being written in America." – PHILIP BOOTH, *Christian Science Monitor.* "There is great courage and strength in her work, as well as authentic artistic skill and power. . . . A moving, disturbing and excellent book."– RALPH J. MILLS, JR., *Book Week.*

$4.95 Cloth; $1.95 Paper

Also by ADRIENNE RICH:

NECESSITIES OF LIFE

"Ranks her among the most interesting poets writing in English today . . . the most important book of new poems since Randall Jarrell's *The Lost World.*" – ALBERT J. GELPI, *Christian Science Monitor*

$4.50 Cloth; $1.95 Paper

SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

"Demandingly quiet . . . and persuasively selfless . . ."– PHILIP BOOTH, *Christian Science Monitor.* $4.50 Cloth; $1.95 Paper

At all bookstores, or from
W. W. NORTON & COMPANY, INC.
55 Fifth Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10003

"Some of the most vital poetry of recent years."
—CHAD WALSH, *Book World*

ANNE SEXTON

LOVE POEMS

BY PULITZER PRIZE WINNER FOR POETRY

"Anne Sexton's are the most curious and often contradictory love poems written in our time — or any other time. They are the hottest and the coldest, the most self-tortured and the most self-derisive, the wittiest and wildest, impassioned, unashamed, compulsive and metaphor-mad. They are, as I have intimated, the most direct and most disturbing love poems I've ever read, and only Anne Sexton could have written them."

— LOUIS UNTERMEYER

"Anne Sexton's poems have the strangeness of originality and the compulsion of truth."

— RICHARD EBERHART

At your bookstore • $4.00
In paper, $1.95

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stage with a poet's imagination. He knew how to use emotion without making his characters appear hysterical.

If contemporary English dramatic writing is largely worthless, the standard of contemporary dramatic production could not be higher. Fifteen years ago, as a schoolboy, I used to go the Old Vic, pay my half-a-crown, and take my place on the wooden benches in the gallery. The leading actor at the Old Vic then was Richard Burton. I saw him in such varied parts as Hamlet and Coriolanus and Sir Toby Belch. But Shakespeare production in those days tended to follow a set convention; a number of West End Shakespeare productions of that time, featuring Gielgud, Redgrave, and Wolfit, seemed only marginally different from what was going on at the Old Vic. Now as the National Theatre, the Old Vic, is doing with Shakespeare what Shakespeare himself did with language, revealing a world the imagination had had no conception of before. Sir Laurence Olivier's production of *Love's Labour's Lost* was a feast for the senses. The speaking, the movement, the costumes, the lighting: never before have I experienced such total aesthetic gratification in the theatre. The National Theatre's great virtue is that it doesn't go in for any such foolishness as star casting—unless, of course, Olivier plays a part. The splendour is the creation of a team of gifted actors and highly imaginative producers; it's like some happy astrological conjunction of planets casting a benevolent glow upon mankind.

The National Theatre's chief rival in producing Shakespeare is the Royal Shakespeare Company at whose London theatre, the Aldwych, may now be seen a rare production of *Troilus and Cressida*—a wonderfully modern play dominated by the cynical mockery of Thersites, whose insistence that lechery and war is what life is all about could have been a conclusion contrived by a contemporary playwright. Again, drama is seen as visual imagery underlining verbal content; again, stagecraft has reached technically so subtle a level that only Shakespeare seems to offer a play complex enough to extract from the technical resources the full range of their inventiveness.

The work of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre has rather eclipsed the glory of the West End theatre which in recent years has striven to meet the two distinguished companies on their own terms by producing glittering revivals of plays guaranteed to be commercially successful; any commercial doubt has been overcome by relying heavily on star casting. The latest revival, *She Stoops to Conquer* at the Garrick, is a triumphant success. From reading the play I had not expected to be laughing aloud while seeing it performed. Though this was an unexpected pleasure this summer, my greatest surprise was not in the theatre but at the opera. The Sadler's Wells, which produces opera in English, and where productions of *The Magic Flute* and *The Barber of Seville* provided enchantment and good old-fashioned melodrama

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW DIRECTIONS BOOKS

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI/TYRANNUS NIX?

Political satire on ". . . Nixon Nixon enigma Nixon." *Paper,* $1.25

THOMAS MERTON/THE GEOGRAPHY OF LOGRAIRE

The Trappist monk's last major work. "A wide-angle mosaic of poems and dreams." *Cloth,* $4.95

GUILLEVIC/SELECTED POEMS

Major selection from the French poet. Translated by Denise Levertov. Bilingual. *Cloth,* $5.95; *Paper,* $1.95

EZRA POUND/CONFUCIUS

The Great Digest, The Unwobbling Pivot, The Analects. Pound's versions of the "Stone Classics." *Cloth,* $6.50; *Paper,* $2.45

DYLAN THOMAS/A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES

Handsome gift edition with wood engravings by Fritz Eichenberg. *Cloth,* $4.00; *Ltd. edition* (with extra, signed prints), $200.00

DYLAN THOMAS/COLLECTED PROSE

Quite Early One Morning, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog, Adventures in the Skin Trade. 3 volume boxed set. *Paper,* $4.90

DOUGLAS CLEVERDON/THE GROWTH OF MILK WOOD

Textual variants of Thomas's *Under Milk Wood. Cloth,* $8.50

KENNETH REXROTH/AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

Fascinating personal Americana. Re-issue. *Paper,* $2.95

KENNETH PATCHEN/SLEEPERS AWAKE

Re-issue of this unique "novelistic fantasy." *Paper,* $2.25

Other Paperbooks

Louis-Ferdinand Céline: *Guignol's Band,* $1.95; John Hawkes: *Lunar Landscapes,* $2.45; Henry Miller: *The Books in My Life,* $2.45 and *The Cosmological Eye,* $2.25; Kenneth Patchen: *Collected Poems,* $3.95; Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Wall,* $1.75; W. C. Williams: *The William Carlos Williams Reader,* $3.25

NEW DIRECTIONS BOOKS

333 Sixth Avenue, New York 10014

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

respectively, and the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, where a new production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* transcended all expectations of ecstasy (even if it dissatisfied the music critics), are both opera houses where one may expect pleasurable experience at the very least.

Dramatic experience, I remarked earlier, is best when offered by the poets. It is curious that no young English poet has attempted drama. Ted Hughes has written some promising pieces for radio, but for any serious verse drama one had only an import from across the Atlantic—Robert Lowell's *The Old Glory,* which struck me as a very dull affair, indeed. The present generation of English poets, taking Larkin as its eldest member and Seamus Heaney (an Irishman) as its youngest, is a singularly unambitious one. I requested the leading poetry publishers to send me what they had published since last spring. I received thirty books. The most interesting of these were by John Berryman, Louis Zukofsky, Hart Crane, W. D. Snodgrass, George Seferis, Anna Akhmatova.

The English poets, it seems to me, have become narrower and narrower in their scope. They have very little to say, and no language of any vitality with which to say it. A uniform dreariness prevails. It's almost as if express trains had stopped running and trams had taken their place; the journey through the works of the contemporary English poets is long, slow, boring and affords only very occasionally a view worth looking at. It was my intention to include in this essay a critique of some detail of a few of the new books of poetry; but it strikes me now as a futile pursuit. It occurs to me that the same principle of democratization which led to the Prime Minister being abused and the old, established institutions to be discredited has led to a loss of importance in the traditional subject-matter of poetry. We're going through a phase of polite verse on irrelevant themes, or pop and sub-surrealist verse on supposedly relevant themes, or anguished verse on neurotic themes; and the basic fault of most of the poetry in England today is that it mimics gestures—polite, pop or anguished—and does not concern itself with language. As I see it, there is only one poet since Eliot who has profoundly concerned himself with language, and that is John Berryman. And he, unfortunately, because his idiom and tone are American rather than English, is either not being read by the English poets or is being read and not assimilated. I don't want to suggest that a reading of Berryman will change the English poets for the better; my point is that Berryman's achievement is the result of a kind of preoccupation which the present generation of English poets is not bothering itself with.

The poets in London whom I meet and talk to from time to time will not agree with any of this. London at present is a city which seems to inspire a great deal of confidence among people who have achieved very little. There's an air of conviction that things are just fine. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Notes on Contributors

ZULFIKAR GHOSE,* a young Pakistani poet who has lived for some years in London, is a lecturer at the University of Texas this year. His novel, *The Murder of Aziz Khan,* was brought out here recently by John Day, and *he is now preparing a volume of Selected Poems* for publication in the U. S.

GEORGE SCOTT-MONCRIEFF* has written several books on Scotland and heraldry, including *Edinburgh* and *The Scottish Islands.* His latest play, *The Hoopoe,* is due for production in Edinburgh in the autumn.

J. MITCHELL MORSE teaches at Temple University and is the author of *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism.*

PHILIP LEVINE's collection of poems, *Not This Pig,* was published by Wesleyan University Press in 1968. Mr. Levine spent last year in Málaga.

E. M. CIORAN, a Rumanian living in Paris and writing in French, is the noted author of *La Chute dans le Temps, Le Mauvais Démiurge* and other books (Gallimard). Several of his essays have been published in this Review.

FREDERICK BROWN's biography of Jean Cocteau, *An Impersonation of Angels,* was published by Viking last year.

W. H. AUDEN's essay in this issue will be published by the Princeton University Press as the "Introduction" to *Analects,* the forthcoming Volume 14 of *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry,* Bollingen Series XLV.

DANIEL HOFFMAN's most recent book of verse is *Striking the Stones* (Oxford University Press). He teaches English at the University of Pennsylvania.

DANIEL CURLEY* spent the past year living and writing in London, and has returned to teaching in the English Department of the University of Illinois. He has published two novels and has been putting together a new collection of his stories.

JYOTIRMOY DATTA is a Bengali poet and critic living in Calcutta. His translations from Benoy Mojumdar, commissioned by the Asian Literature Program of The Asia Society, were published in the Winter 1968-69 issue of this Review.

RAYMOND DURGNAT* teaches History of Art at St Martin's School of Art, London, and at the Royal College of Art. He is a film critic and author of *Buñuel, Franju, Films and Feelings,* and *Eros in the Cinema.*

STEPHEN FARBER is Los Angeles Editor of *Film Quarterly* and a contributor to *Sight and Sound.* He is currently writing a screenplay about young radical terrorists in America.

ULLI BEIER* is the founder and former editor of *Black Orpheus,* the African literary magazine. He now lives in Papua, where he has just started New Guinea's first literary magazine, *Kovave.* His book, *Contemporary Art in Africa,* was published by Praeger last year.

HERBERT LEIBOWITZ is Assistant Professor of English at Columbia University. He is the author of *Hart Crane: An Introduction to the Poetry* (Columbia University Press) and *Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism* (Hill & Wang).

BERNARD BERGONZI is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *The Early H. G. Wells* and *Heroes' Twilight.*

ROGER SALE'S textbook, *On Writing,* will be published by Random House later this fall.

JAMES P. DEGNAN* is Associate Professor of English at the University of Santa Clara. He is the author of the textbooks *Writing Analyses of Literature* and *A Language and Literature Reader* and has published fiction, essays, and satire in various periodicals.

A new novel, *Them,* by JOYCE CAROL OATES, is on the Vanguard list for fall publication.

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN teaches at Smith College.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certainly, if you exclude standards of excellence from your judgement, then everything is just fine. I don't think I'll miss the London of new plays and poetry readings and publishers' parties And in any case, it would be a lie to suggest that I'm leaving London *because* its culture has become a polythene bag which is suffocating me. It's just that my various misgivings about London have coincided with an opportunity to leave it. I shall come back. If only to walk along the Thames from Hammersmith to Chiswick, watching the poplars, the gracious houses and the oarsmen. Or to lie under a chestnut tree within a mile of Piccadilly Circus. Or even to enquire at a bookshop if a new poet has not emerged in my absence.

—ZULFIKAR GHOSE

Letter from Scotland

THE BEGINNING OF 1969 saw the publication of what will with little doubt be the Scottish novel of the year. Yet it is not a new novel. It first appeared no less than one hundred and forty-five years ago. However since during most of the time since then it has been out of print and unobtainable (although I have one friend who found he had a first edition: but his family have been building up their library for over three hundred years and so have an unusual selection), *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is bound to be new to most readers. The *Confessions* has been described as the first psychological novel, and some twenty years ago André Gide was asking "how a work so singular and enlightening, so especially fitted to arouse passionate interest both in those who are attracted by religious and moral questions, and, for quite other reasons, in psychologists and artists, and above all in surrealists who are so particularly drawn to the demoniac in every shape—how explain that such a work should have failed to become famous?"

Its author, James Hogg, was born in 1770 at Ettrick in the Scottish Border country, the son of a shepherd turned small farmer. When he was seven his father went bankrupt, and he had to go himself to the herding, which put an end to all the few months schooling Hogg ever had. He spent his own life either as a shepherd or renting small farms and going bankrupt in them. At twenty-three he first began writing poetry, but it was twenty years later before he gained fame with his narrative poem, "The Queen's Wake" (I had a copy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but never succeeded in reading it), and was accepted into the company of Wordsworth, De Quincey, *et alia.* Meanwhile he had helped Sir Walter Scott in the compiling of that pioneer work of folklore and song, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.* It was Hogg's aged mother who was responsible for the often-quoted remark made to Scott, after he had recorded all the old ballads she remembered, that he had spoilt them by writing them down and committing them to print, (as it were petrifying them by taking them out of a living oral tradition: her accusation was valid enough, but the tradition was a dying one, and Scott helped materially in preserving what was left of it besides stimulating other, sometimes more careful collectors).

Hogg wrote a considerable quantity of prose and verse, much of it better than that of most of his contemporaries yet, as is more often the case with literary effort than authors readily admit, strictly conditioned by the fashions of the time, and little read today. Circumstances drove him to writing potboilers and his one work of genius fell upon stoney ground, indeed in stoney silence for it received only one review and that a castigation of the utmost pomp and priggishness. He did in fact publish it anonymously, knowing that it must cause offence amongst Scottish Calvinists. He said that he never made a penny out of it, and so was not encouraged to write again in the same vein. When eventually, after his death, the *Confessions* was first republished, it was in a much cut and bowdlerised edition. Earlier biographers of Hogg probably considered that they did him a kindness in not even mentioning that he had written any such book. Over a century was to pass before André Gide was to write of his first reading of the *Confessions,* "It is long since I can remember being so taken hold of, so voluptuously tormented by any book." It is a story of demonic possession, but what particularly impressed Gide was the way in which the intruding Devil could equally be seen as a psychological *alter ego,* "the exteriorized development of our own desires, of our pride, of our most secret thoughts. It consists throughout in the indulgence we accord to our own selves. Hence the profound teaching of this strange book."

Although much simpler, Hogg's book like *Wuthering Heights* owes much to the ingenuity of its construction. It is told in two parts. The first, written deliberately in a slightly prosey style, gives the commonly accepted version of certain events supposed to have taken place around the year 1700. We have a humorous account of the nuptials of a lusty old laird and a fervently Calvinistic girl from Glasgow. The girl seeks consolation from the Reverend Mr. Wringhim, a grim and canting puritan. She has two sons. George Colwan, the older, grows up a gay, charming young man. Robert, the younger, is adopted by Wringhim, whose son he may actually be, and is brought up in the antinomian tenets that carried Calvinism to the extreme conclusion whereby the elect were saved whatever they did,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while those whose salvation was not predestined were as inevitably damned. So far the novel reads in a fairly conventional, rather eighteenth-century idiom, but this gives force to the impact of the second half, the private memoirs and confessions of Robert Colwan. In the first half we are merely revolted by Robert's sanctimoniousness and cowardice. In the second, his confessions, we find ourselves suddenly involved: this revolting creature is, after all, ourselves, mirroring, in Gide's words, our own desires, our own pride, our own most secret thoughts. We know from the first half of the book how ignominiously he has pursued his brother and finally stabbed him in the back. In the confessions we see his own picture of the same events, himself eternally justified, admonishing his brother and finally killing him in fair fight in a duel. All along he is encouraged by the mysterious stranger who may have no existence outside his own mind but who drags him ever deeper into depravity under cover of religion, turning at last malevolent, just as our own thoughts can turn towards ourselves, and so leading him to the suicide's grave still to be seen on a lonely Border hilltop.

Although set in the Scotland of a certain period, and written when Calvinist tenets were still active, Hogg's novel has the intensity derived by a vivid imagination from some deep-felt experience so that it achieves universality and timelessness, and we read it not as an historical romance but as a perturbing personal experience.

The new edition of Hogg's novel is published by the Oxford University Press, which brings to mind the depressing fact that Scotland is now virtually without any general publishers. This is the more remarkable since so many of the best known London houses bear Scottish names, often having started business in Edinburgh or Glasgow. In Hogg's day much of the most enterprising publishing was centred in Edinburgh. Until recently three famous and long-established firms still operated there: two have now been purchased by English octopi and taken away from us altogether, and the third—well, it seems to have slipped into a long peaceful sleep. It is simply not true to suggest that London publishers will do for Scotland what a Scottish-based firm would. London firms think in terms of English sales, and since the population of England is nearly ten times that of Scotland, they will only publish books for which there is likely to be a substantial English demand. I do not for a moment believe that Hugh MacDiarmid, whose first and finest poems were written in Scottish dialect ("synthetic Scots" he called it, since it was not so much a dialect as derived from the standard Scots of the great poets of the past), would have had his work published originally had there not been an enterprising Scottish publisher to launch him. Now his work is recognised internationally. It may seem paradoxical but it remains a fact that it is not cosmopolitan writing but the writing most emphatically sprung from a particular background that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

achieves universality: we only have to think of *The Brothers Karamazov, Huckleberry Finn, Madame Bovary* for endorsement. The events they describe could not conceivably have taken place elsewhere than in Russia, America and France respectively, yet, however much the incidentals may differ from their own lives, the people of far distant climes and times can respond to them with the conviction —yes, life is like that!

It certainly seems absurd that a country with a population of five million that has long prided itself on its high standard of literacy should be without any effective publishing houses. Smaller countries, Norway, Denmark, even Iceland and the Faeroes can maintain lively publishing concerns. In another context a leading figure in the English book trade recently observed, "There can be no doubt of this: a country that no longer exercises full control over the publishing of its own books has lost a vital part of its whole cultural integrity." And this, despite all the new means of communication, remains profoundly true.

But here we come to the salient issue in Scottish life today: whether the two-hundred-and-sixty-two-year-old Union with England is to continue for much longer. It should be said that there has always been some resentment against the Union on the part of the Scots. As the smaller partner of an incorporating, as opposed to a federal, union they were bound to be dominated by the majority in the common parliament, always outvoted, even in respect of their own domestic affairs. The Scots had therefore a good many just grievances. With the great increase in public corporations, state control and subsidies, these became more pronounced, with understandable—but understandably resented—discrimination in favour of the dominant partner. To cite only one typical example there is the treatment of the airport at Prestwick on the Ayrshire coast, an invaluable transatlantic terminal during the War and the best airport climatically, for its freedom from fog, in the British Isles. As soon as the War was over the Government applied discriminatory legislation in order to concentrate traffic in the London area, preventing the expansion of Prestwick airport, the development of feeder services, and severely restricting its use by Continental airlines on the Atlantic route. As an American expert at the time observed, "Stultification, restrictions, and bureaucratic manoeuvering by London may hold down Prestwick by arbitrary means, but the real loser is Britain herself." (Quoted in *The Claim of Scotland,* the excellently balanced and comprehensive study published in 1968, the work of the distinguished philosopher and international negotiator, Professor H. J. Paton.) Now London is having the greatest difficulty in finding space for another airport in its overcrowded environs, while we in Scotland must generally go to London in order to get air transport abroad. Prestwick would have become a major European airport had it simply been allowed to de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

velop in response to demand. If it had been in England, especially in the south, it would not only have been free to do so but would have received every possible assistance.

Scotland in fact, although it retained its own Established Church and distinctive legal system at the Union of 1707, has far less say in its own affairs than a member state of the U. S. A. The demand for a greater measure of autonomy is an old one. Home Rule for Scotland as well as for Ireland was part of Liberal policy in the days of Gladstone. Ultimately the Irish, justifiably doubtful of the good faith of the Westminster Parliament, had to rise in rebellion to gain a far greater independence than the one they originally sought. The Socialist Party included Scottish Home Rule in its policy until it came to power in 1945, when the English Cabinet Minister Herbert Morrison very candidly admitted that they had only kept it there for the sake of gaining Scottish votes.

Yet the present Socialist members were surprised beyond belief when towards the end of 1967 the Scottish National Party won a by-election in what was regarded as one of the safest Socialist seats in the country. To me this seemed clear evidence that Scottish members of Parliament comfortably settled in London simply lose all touch with their own country. For those of us who live and work in Scotland were well aware of a dramatic change in the political climate: that nationalism had almost suddenly become respectable, something to be discussed seriously instead of dismissed with what was often a rather inane contempt. It has been most commonly dismissed on the quaint ground that it would be "putting the clock back": this in an age that has seen the dissolution of the British, French and Italian Empires, that has seen, and sympathised with, violent or sullen resentment on the part of the victims of Russian imperialism. Today even the efficient and tightly-knit French polity is accepting the need for regionalism. It is an age moreover that is coming to realise that democracy can only work where there is involvement, and that people who feel that their votes carry little or no effect become cynical and easy game for anti-democratic forces. Scottish seats in Parliament have long been regarded as sinecures either for ageing Trade Union officials or for carpet-bagging Conservatives: the calibre of representatives in the two main parties has been so low that the Liberals have received most of their scant support in Scotland. It is now plain however that the Liberals are politically a spent force. The Scottish National Party represents much the most active political movement in the country today. The Government has meanwhile taken every precaution against having any further by-elections in Scotland, or, for that matter, in Wales.

It is forty years since various Home Rule associations came together to form the Scottish National Party. It was felt then that the movement would have a cultural content comparable with that of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Irish Movement at the beginning of the century. This was only partially realised. The Scottish National Players failed through lack of cash and/or courage to become another Abbey Theatre, although they launched some good actors, and one notable dramatist in James Bridie. Of our two leading poets only Hugh MacDiarmid was closely identified with nationalism: Edwin Muir, although sympathetic, remained uncommitted. Cunninghame Graham, aristocratic revolutionary and excellent prose-writer of an older generation, and Compton Mackenzie, the novelist, were both active, and certainly the majority of Scottish writers were, and are, nationalist. In 1939 I tried to effect a link with the Irish writers when we launched *The New Alliance*. "But don't forget the old one," said T. S. Eliot in wishing us well, referring of course to the Old Alliance of Scotland with France, formally entered into and sustained for centuries against the common enemy, England. Eliot was always sympathetic to the Scottish cause and well understood our problems and sense of frustration. *The New Alliance* started as a quarterly, with contributions by Hugh MacDiarmid, Frank O'Connor, Edwin Muir, Sean O'Faolain, Fred Higgins, and Jack Yeats. Unfortunately the significance of our bursting upon the world was somewhat minimised by the simultaneous outbreak of war. However, we decided to remain in existence if only as a sort of life-line at a time when everything seemed to be sliding into the abyss: and we did survive the War. We adopted a more modest format and appeared bi-monthly—which, contrary to an extraordinarily popular fallacy, means every second month not every fortnight. Wartime isolation gradually eroded the Irish connection, although Jack Yeats remained one of our most faithful contributors to the end. The end came in 1945: which meant that we had the longest life of any of the many intellectual and literary journals that have waxed and waned under the impact of the Scottish movement. We bowed ourselves out bequeathing a new title to our successor, *The Scots Review*, which aimed at being more popular but was not particularly successful in the effort. Inevitably during the war years, current affairs assuming pressing proportions featured large in our pages. Here I know our readers appreciated, at a time when it was difficult to get away from commentaries that were often little short of hysterical, or heavily loaded with propaganda, the regular assessments made in our pages by J. M. Reid. Reid had to write for us anonymously, since he was editor of a Glasgow daily paper which did not approve of his politics. He was not only in a position to be well informed on current affairs but as a trained historian could see them in a wider perspective. What he wrote then is still readable, since his prognostications have largely been borne out. After the War I once introduced Reid to a visiting American professor who came away saying, "American daily papers don't have editors like that." I had to confess that there was only one of the kind in our country.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reid, under the pseudonym Colin Walkinshaw, had written the best short history of Scotland, taking the subject at last out of that theme of imperial progression which had been developed by Thomas Babington Macaulay in the middle of the nineteenth century. Macaulay's history, brilliantly written, with all the self-assurance of the peak period of British rule, virtually saw the story of the world coming to fulfilment in the British Empire: therefore everything that contributed to that apotheosis was, as the school histories used to put it, *a good thing,* everything else at least a tragic mistake, if not direct evidence of the powers of evil. Not of course that there is anything unusual in historians directing their histories towards their own particular *weltanschauung:* the slant given by Karl Marx is still influential even amongst non-Marxists. But progress is more subtle, fickle, losses and gains going horribly hand in hand.

Scottish history has suffered much distortion from the Macaulay interpretation; some national figures who may more justly be seen as traitors became heroes in his eyes, not for virtue but simply because they contributed to his cherished progression, while others were denied due honour because they opposed it. Inevitably his picture has been countered by an unrealistic romanticism. Reid's book, *The Scots Tragedy,* let in the light of reason, enabling us to see Scotland's as part of Europe's major history instead of the Empire's lesser, transient one. The Empire at that time still seemed secure, and Reid's title derived from the possibility that Scotland might finally disappear as an entity. Instead, the Empire has disappeared, and with it the justification for the Union of 1707.

In 1935, at the end of his history J. M. Reid, foretelling the imminence of a new and disastrous war, asked if Scotland could hope to survive, and concluded:

> If she does not the history of the process whereby the long centuries of her national life have been brought to nothing will still be of the strongest intellectual interest. For the final and permanent destruction of a nation once fully established and conscious of itself will be something unique in the records of western Christiandom. Even Aragon, whose national life was so much briefer and less complete than that of Scotland, has left its obstinate core alive in Catalonia. Nationality is, indeed, one of the toughest things in the world.

—GEORGE SCOTT-MONCRIEFF

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joyce Week in Dublin

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL James Joyce Symposium, held in Dublin June 10-16 inclusive, was a gathering of devout pilgrims. Almost half of us were from the United States (including one beautiful one from Hawaii), a fair number from Ireland and England, and one, two, three or four each from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. There were movies and plays inspired by Joyce's works, there was an evening of Joycean music, and there was an exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints of various kinds illustrating the works—including a set of magnificent large color prints by Saul Field, who I think is as good as Ben Shahn. There was also, at the concluding dinner, a provocative speech by Leslie Fiedler, to the effect that although he continued to love the works of Joyce, Proust and Kafka, the kind of élite modernism they represented, which tended to emphasize and increase the distance between the artist and the public, was no longer valid for writers, was in fact "dead." He didn't say *their* works were dead, and he paid warm tribute to the continuing liveliness of *Ulysses*.

A number of Dublin admirers of Joyce, I was told, felt left out and slighted in their own city, but there was no valid ground for any such feeling. The Symposium was a meeting of the members of the James Joyce Foundation, but there is no more democratic organization in the world, it is open to everybody, its sessions were in fact attended by several people who were not members, and if more had come they would have given us more pleasure. The meetings were announced in the press. The only slighting—doubtless due to poor logistics rather than to any ill will—was done by the Guinness Brewery. It gave a hearty buffet supper to which admission was by invitation only, and sent half the invitations to Dubliners and half to members of the Symposium, selected nobody knows how. A rumor spread that everybody was welcome, with or without an invitation, but those who went without invitations were turned away at the door. My sense of grievance is not personal, since I got an invitation; but everybody felt aggrieved because not everybody was invited.

As for the scholarly sessions—well, the MLA was never like this! Our honored guest Frank Budgen, a gentleman among scholars, said at the opening session, "I feel like an obscure synoptic in a gathering of theologians." He caught the tone of the meeting perfectly; for to us Joyceans Dublin is a holy city, as to others Jerusalem, Rome and Mecca are holy cities; the fact that most of its citizens regard our faith as a wicked or ridiculous delusion doesn't deter us from our footstep-following and relic-touching; and sometimes we conduct our synods with passion almost as unbridled, and manners almost as bad, as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those of the church fathers. The word "Joycean" in our mouths has a tone that I imagine the word "Christian" had in the mouths of the Council of Nicaea. The charming and intelligent Mary K. Doris, a reporter from the London office of *Newsweek,* attended all the sessions. When I expressed surprise that *Newsweek* would take such interest in such a gathering, she said, "I am here as a Joycean"—and there was a gleam in her eye. We are all *dévots.*

That is not in itself alarming, but some of the special forms of our devotion are. Perpetual devotion to the text of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake,* a willingness to spend one's life restoring its lost integrity, is admirable but eccentric. I have nothing against eccentricity, mind you, in fact I prefer it to concentricity; I merely observe that it *is* eccentric. To the familiar trio of eccentrics, the hero, the artist and the saint, Proust added the invalid; and let us add the scholar. As Richard Kain remarked after a bitter bibliographical debate, "Men never fight so fiercely as when they are fighting over a comma." He too was merely noting a fact, not stating an objection; I don't doubt that he has fought over commas himself, as I have done and do now and will do as long as I have breath left to whisper, and as Joyce himself did. It is the concentrics who let civilization fall apart. It has often been said that if Joyce could look down or rather up at the labors of the Joyceans he would be annoyed or bored or contemptuous or amused or indifferent; but any such attitude would be quite a change from the intense and often helpful interest he took in them during his lifetime. To be sure, none of us could have written *Ulysses;* but the fact that a man is not a genius is nothing against him, and if he deeply cares about the work of a genius of the first rank, those who don't care about it have no reason to feel superior. I say this because most of the Dubliners I have talked to don't see why anybody should make so much fuss about an unreadable dirty book by a writer who "spat on Ireland." I quote. The man who said that was an artist, not an intellectual, but most of the Dublin intellectuals I met expressed the same view in more decorous language. They prefer Patrick Kavanagh and Flann O'Brien.

Others, less hostile, say they have never been able to get into *Ulysses* but they enjoyed *Dubliners* because they have known people like its characters. They don't spontaneously mention *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* but if you ask them they say yes, they liked that too. *Finnegans Wake* is just a title. In any case, the Penguin paperback edition of *Ulysses* ("The greatest novel of the century, 10 s") is prominently displayed in many bookstores, sometimes in the section devoted to books on Ireland—history, politics, archaeology, social problems, lives of the patriots, etc.—a section that is a prominent feature of every bookstore of any degree of seriousness.

I got a copy of the hardcover Bodley Head *Ulysses* in Browne and Nolan to send to a friend on Bloomsday, but the clerk had to get it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out of the store room. "There's not much call for it," he said. Browne and Nolan, which is frequently named in *Finnegans Wake,* and always in connection with Giordano Bruno Nolanus, must represent the Shaun in him: for it is a very model and symbol of propriety. Its windows are full of gift books: Irish scenery, the better known Italian Renaissance painters, gourmet cookery. The first thing you see when you enter is a showcase full of fine leather wallets, address books, etc.; then comes a showcase of fountain pens; then religious books, travel books, Irish history etc., fiction, poetry, drama. *Portnoy's Complaint?* No. Not here, not anywhere in Dublin. *Playboy* doesn't seem to be available either.

The Capel Street branch of the Dublin Public Library, where (under British rule) Bloom got Molly Paul de Kock's *Ruby, the Pride of the Ring,* no longer has anything by Paul de Kock. It does have all Joyce's works except *Finnegans Wake,* the criticism and the letters; it also has some half-dozen books about him. The bookshop in the Merchants' Arch, where Bloom bought *Sweets of Sin,* is still in business, run now not by a phlegm-choked old man but by a knowing young woman; it is full of trashy paperbacks with garish violent covers, and the two tables outside are full of second-hand books of the same kind.

The magazine *Photo Bits,* with which Bloom got a free sepia print of "The Bath of the Nymph," is apparently defunct. As for *Titbits,* in which he read "Matcham's Masterstroke" by Philip Beaufoy—well, there is a magazine of the same name; it is chiefly a girlie-and-humor magazine, but interspersed among the whores and the cartoons it does have educational features that Bloom would find interesting. The Summer Special issue, which I got, contains half a page of titbits of information about gold, "the world's most fascinating metal," under the title "The Four-Letter Word that Drives Men Mad" and a half-page photograph of a gilded girl from *Goldfinger.* There is also a one-page article, purporting to be by an ex-circus hand, to the effect that circus acts involving "man-eating tigers" are fraudulent because the tigers are toothless and "senile." There is a long article on the shocking immorality of contemporary Rome ("Europe's city of shame and scandal"), illustrated with a photograph of a man roughly tearing a woman's dress off in the street ("an everyday scene in the world's most eyebrow-raising city") and a photograph of a woman doing a strip-tease at a party—presumably the party where "the host greeted us wearing lumberjack's boots and a Robin Hood hat. Nothing more." The author says he had thought nothing could shock him—"but that was before I probed the appalling depths." There is an article on the Amsterdam flea market, and one on how actors sabotage each other's performances, and finally a story, "The Living Dead," which readers are encouraged to read by this come-on in big red letters: "The vampire smiled and slowly furled his black cape. He had terrorised and killed. But there was still one thing more to do. . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The tobacco shop where I got *Titbits* had a large stock of paperback novels with such titles as *Wildcat, Goodbye Blues, Love's a Loser, House of Terror, Be My Guest, Too Clever by Far, Moody Melody* and *The Wishing Stone.* Some such books have brief announcements of their themes on the covers. As thus: "*Master of Karatanzi.* Danger and a shared love for this rugged country might bring them together; but there were other forces that might separate them forever." "*Surgery in the Hills.* Her dreams of becoming a nurse were shattered, but there among the wild hills and valleys she found the love for which she had waited." "*The Drummer of Corrae.* She was torn between the love for her grandfather and his home—and the man whose job was to destroy it." "*A Girl Named Smith.* She was tired of being 'Good old Mary'—she wanted excitement and romance."

All this stuff comes from England. It isn't Irish. As a matter of fact it isn't English either, or American, or anything. It is acultural, it is nothing, it is death, it is plastic, it is a débris-filled vacant lot in our culture, as Paul de Kock and Philip Beaufoy were in the culture of 1904. To say that it is an aspect of the Americanization of Europe, as several Dubliners did say to me, is to be wrong on three counts: (1) Europe has always been capable of getting sick without our assistance—Baudelaire notwithstanding, the pervasive Americanization of Europe hardly began until after World War 1; (2) the Americanization wasn't all bad by any means, and (3) the brands of kitsch represented by the titles and passages I have quoted are obviously not American brands.

Dublin's intellectual culture is fed by the National Library, the National Museum, Trinity College (Swift's alma mater), and University College (Joyce's). Our Symposium was held at Trinity. We were told that U.C.D. was using all its auditoriums for exams, that it was overcrowded in any case, and that it was preoccupied with the aftermath of a student revolt—as indeed it was, for reasons that we shall see.

The hot zeal of the Joycean discussions at Trinity kept its heat all day, every day: the printed schedule seemed quite reasonable and decent, but so many of the sessions ran overtime (because of the arguments) that there was scarcely time to calm down between them. We relaxed somewhat about 5:30, in a room set aside for us on the third floor of the Bailey, a pleasant pub which in its publicity falsely claims to have been called the Burton restaurant by Joyce in *Ulysses,* though the Burton (now no more) was a real restaurant across the street near Davy Byrne's (which is still doing nicely) and Joyce wasn't in the habit of misnaming commercial establishments. Howsomever, the Bailey now offers as a tourist attraction the front door of 7 Eccles Street—out in the hall between the telephone booth and the men's room. What a place to put the True Cross! (In case you didn't know, Leopold Bloom's house has been torn down to make room for a convent, all American and Irish efforts to save it having brought no re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sponse from anyone in a position to do anything. There is an implausible rumor to the effect that the nuns have promised to put on the convent a brass plaque acknowledging that it stands on the site of etc. Before going to Dublin I had heard that the whole block of row houses had been torn down, but that is not the case: all are intact except No. 7 and the adjoining No. 6.)

Anyhow, on the first evening at the Bailey I met a remarkable woman, Eithne Strong, poet, feature writer for *The Irish Press,* mother of nine and grandmother of five. I was flabbergasted, because she doesn't look more than 35 at most. Two or three days later she invited me to lunch with her family in Monkstown (the suburb where Gretta and Gabriel Conroy lived), and I met her husband—the psychoanalyst Rupert Strong, one of the subtlest minds I have ever encountered—together with the four younger children, one son-in-law and one infant grandchild. The lunch—Irish stew and strawberry shortcake—was hearty, simple, good and abundant; and afterwards Rupert (we got on first-name terms quite naturally, something that rarely happens with me) drove me out to Powerscourt, a large and beautiful English estate dating from the Elizabethan invasions, and back by a different way, through miles of peat bog. I brought home a piece of peat and a stalk of bog cotton. Sneer if you are so inclined.

During the week after the Symposium the Strongs took me to various places: backstage at the Gate Theater, where their second-oldest daughter, Mrs. Brita Durley, was acting stage manager, and where I met Micheál MacLiammóir, who was playing in his own *Ill Met by Moonlight;* to Phoenix Park, Chapelizod, Blackrock, Joyce's tower at Sandycove, the Vico Road (pronounced "Vye-go"), the Brazen Head Tavern (where Robert Emmet planned the rising of 1798 and where his desk is now in effect a table at which people sit and drink), the Forty-Foot Hole (where men shed their class differences with their clothes, Rupert said, priests and navvies swimming together without self-consciousness—a point that makes Stephen Dedalus' and Haines' refusal to go in more significant); etc., etc.

But the most revealing of all these experiences was an evening at one of Slattery's pubs in Capel Street, where singers and players of traditional folk music from every county in Ireland performed to raise money for certain political candidates and for the preservation of the culture of which their music is an expression. Musicians and audience alike spoke Gaelic almost exclusively, switching to English only occasionally and only for the benefit of American visitors. There seems to be a great deal of self-conscious and exacerbated Irishness in Dublin—a never-ending defiant assertion of their own distinctive qualities after centuries during which English qualities were held up to them as more desirable. "No Irish person can hope to be more than a mulatto Englishman, and if that be an ambition and an end it is not an heroic one," said James Stephens in 1916; the large majority of Irish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

persons have quite evidently never had any such ambition, but they have had a need to prove that Irish is beautiful; and the effects of oppression are so long-lasting that that need still persists. Even so, the display of it I witnessed that night in Slattery's must have been exceptional in its intensity.

All the performers were excellent, but the most brilliantly blazing stars were Séamus Ennis, bagpiper and story-teller, and Paddy Bán O'Broin, flutist, harmonica player, singer and dancer. Ennis played a set of pipes whose air supply came from a leather bag he held under his left arm and squeezed like a pair of bellows, leaving his mouth free; his stories made the audience shout, yell and scream with laughter, and his playing was impressive even to my uninitiated ears, which undoubtedly missed many subtleties. O'Broin, who acted as master of ceremonies, also sang with huge gusto and played a long wooden flute with great beauty and evident virtuosity. He is 70 years old, but at the end of the evening he danced such a jig as I had never seen. Immediately afterwards the Strongs introduced me to him. He wasn't even breathing hard. They told him I had come to Ireland for the Joyce Symposium, I told him I had never seen such dancing in my life, and he said, "My grandfather danced like this, and Joyce interrupted my grandfather's dancing and spat on Ireland."

So much for the past. The future is in the universities. The reason U.C.D. was holding exams during the week of June 10-16 was that classes had been suspended for a month following a student seizure and occupation of the administrative offices on February 26. With my superficial second-hand knowledge of the events and their causes, I shall not commit the impertinence of analyzing them. My interest in them was aroused by the arresting title of a book I found in Browne and Nolan, *The Gentle Revolution: Crisis in the Universities,* edited by Philip Pettit and published by Scepter Books, Dublin (10 shillings). It consists of articles by nine faculty members, one graduate assistant and one undergraduate student at U.C.D., plus the texts of manifestos, resolutions, fact sheets, agreements, etc. The book was written in a week, and everybody I asked said it was a clear and fair account of what had taken place and of the underlying states of mind. I can say that it is remarkably well written.

Briefly, the revolt seems to have been precipitated by the administration's decision to relieve the overcrowding by moving the Arts, Commerce and Law faculties to a new campus at Belfield, a location they chose, I gather, because there was nothing there but open space. The students were appalled not only by the loss of Dublin's amenities but also by the facts that the administration forgot to provide a library at Belfield and didn't think to consult the students. As a result, Students for Democratic Action, the Irish counterpart of our Students for a Democratic Society, was suddenly transformed from a small group with no following to a leadership group supported (within

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

limits) by an overwhelming majority of the students and by a considerable number of the faculty. When I left Dublin on June 23 its leaders were fighting expulsion, but the reforms they demanded were in process of being achieved: there will be a library at Belfield, and there will most probably be mandatory consultation henceforth with elected representatives of the students at all levels, from the departmental to the general administrative.

Does the story seem familiar? It is like the American story in other ways as well: chiefly in the fact that the S.D.A., unlike the majority of its supporters, is interested in reforming the universities only incidentally to its main interest, which is to change by revolutionary means the whole nature of society. Its leaders are said to be disappointed that of the many students who want academic reform so few want social revolution; the leaders' chief allies would seem to be the die-hard opponents of academic reform, who I gather are convincing more and more students that there will be no significant reform unless there is a revolution. I asked two Dublin intellectuals who are in touch with events if the S.D.A. seemed to be promoting Moscow's or Peking's foreign policy—encouraging anti-Semitism, mysticism, drug-taking, dropping-out, etc., and trying to wreck the educational system as a means of stupefying the whole society. Both said no. The witty and alert Alfred MacLochlainn, Keeper of Printed Books at the National Library, said that some students belonged to the Grille, a left-wing Catholic group, and a few to the Internationalists, a Maoist group, but that the main push came from the S.D.A., which was idealistic and concerned with Irish rather than international issues—that the war in Vietnam, for example, though of course disgusting, was not a major concern of theirs. And Liam de Paor, lecturer in history at U.C.D., member of the Royal Irish Academy and the German Archaeological Institute, news analyst for Irish Television, visiting professor at several American universities, and a contributor to *The Gentle Revolution,* said, "Conspiracy theories don't work out. We have a generation of students who came after the generation that learned to live with the bomb, and they are opting out of a great many things that we took for granted."

Outside in the sunshine the pretty Dublin girls in their micro-miniskirts twinkled past, and a few blocks away the Anna Livia Boutique was crowded. The four-lane O'Connell Street bridge is said to be the only bridge in the world that is as wide as it is long, for certainly the Liffey is not the biggest river in the world—but thanks to Joyce it is now a literary river to which pilgrims will continue to come, revolution or no revolution: "In the name of Annah the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities, haloed be her eve, her singtime sung, her rill be run, unhemmed as it is uneven!"

—J. MITCHELL MORSE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poetry

POETRY CENTER, 92 ST. YM-YWHA

$15. Membership

admits you free to evenings with

Jorge Luis Borges
Anthony Burgess
Allen Ginsberg
Donald Justice
Jerzy Kosinski
John Logan
Robert Lowell
Octavio Paz
Muriel Rukeyser
John Simon
William Jay Smith
Gary Snyder

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

and many other writers

Please write or call 212 427-6000 for detailed brochure

at the Y

1395 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NYC. Fi 8-1500

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PHILIP LEVINE

Thistles

for George Oppen

A MOUNTAIN THISTLE IN MARCH,

the stem a bitter green,
the blossom faded
like the stained robes
of martyrs.
Roots
spun through entrails
of the wakened earth
darkening into rocks
and the long nests.

The sun up long
past five, hanging
in a crown of gold.
—Take the mountain thistle—
it said.
A film of snow
whirling from the thickets,
the new throats
of my fingers
streaked and itching.

IT'S AUGUST.

Dust sifts from the dark wings
of the magpie, the trails
flounder in sand.
A high wind in the tips
of the pines,
without
a sigh the leaf on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my palm dies
into itself.
Somewhere
on this mountain
a truck gears down
and the rocks flake
into smaller and smaller lives.

I CLIMBED NINE FENCES THIS MORNING

haven't seen a cow or goat or horse or man . . .

In the center of a long meadow
try to sit still
the patient rocks staring
the sun stopped in
the pines assembled at the far edge
listening

Each time I lean my weight
on the top strand
something in me tears loose

How do I get out?

IF HE RAN

his long hair would fly
in the wind, if he sat still
his mind would run
with the names of rocks and trees
turned against him.

23yr old draft dodger
he tracks the rim
of this sullen mountain lake.
He sent his girl away

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he watched his
Whitman, Rilke, Snyder
go up with the boathouse
a bright showering cage
against the night sky.

He feels the corners
of his mouth pull down,
his eyes vague.
Some old poet
would say, Bereft.
He thinks, Up Tight,
Fucked over, trying to walk
inside my life.

IN THE CITY OF MY BIRTH

someone sees my eyes
and turns from the mirror
someone hears my voice
and shouts and shouts
to keep it out

At noon through the vacant squares
the sirens breathe
shuddering in each life
I lost

In the room I forgot
which I said I'd never forget
the mended bathrobe slips
to the floor,
the closet sags
with the sudden weights
of regret

The middle-aged press operator
curls on my bed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in his leather jacket
In the shadows
of the struck elm
the sparrows hush

Above, on the 4th floor
the Appalachian widow
sings into the sink
until her sons come one by one
to take the trees apart.

DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

in Fresno, L.A., Oakland
a man with three names and no features
closes my file.
The winds
are weighed, the distance clocked.
Everything is entered in the book.

HANGING ON IN THE MOON SOIL

north of Alicante
where even the rocks
can no longer sleep,
the cactus
dreams on the promise
of rain.
Little pagan
villages of green spines
tenements of earthly joy.

And here and here
a thistle
like a fox leaps
toward the burning
filaments of shade.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEY GO ON HITTING

flies and grounders.
The darkness rises
from the long grass
and pulls them in.

The last raw plume
of day breaks up
and flares out, when I
look back there's no one,
only a dark sea—

Somewhere out there
forests of antennas,
empty houses, trees, posts,
dead cars, all
the closed presences
of this world—

And the voices of kids
floating out and back.

My wife and I
stand wordless
on the chilled lawn
waiting for our sons
to come as they please,
to step suddenly out
of nothing, still warm,
grass smeared, robed
in their own songs.

THE BIG GUY RAN AND HID HIMSELF

in the can, and Mez and I
stayed and fought. Their drunkenness
uglier even than ours, their bodies
marvellous and no imagination to pull

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their punches.
Upright to the hospital,
the shabby dignity of losers
who fought for nothing
and deserved everything we got.

7 years
later the big guy, rabbit-eyed
at quiet New York drink party,
shook my hand.
Friend, I didn't say,
we get our chance, it comes
round and it
comes round. Those twitch-nosed
academic pants-pisser poets
of the 50's will take up
against the State,
and you'll be with us,
Mother.

RISES IN THE DARK

fixes coffee
hands moving like starlings
above the glowing electric rings

Outside a mockingbird snaps
from the sycamore
the branch sways
and calms

60 year old wanderer
he sits in the dark
in my chair, plotting
the next move, the poem

—Tool & Die past,
L.A. backyard cabinetshop

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

& no loyalty oath,
8 yrs Mexico woodlathe—

Always a new dark
the cup nests in the stained hands
the mockingbird returns
the tree returns.

THE DAWN FOX

high on the meth of
drugged chickens
attacks dogs, gophers, hoses,
tricycle tires.
If they knew
he was here they'd hunt
him on horseback among
the abandoned cars
in The Hollywood Hills'
Wilderness, they'd
make a game of it
drinking his death in
Pepsi,
his death who rode
the shield of Luca up the impossible
Etruscan slopes, who turned
to fight the pig mounted Archers
of the Moon.
Tearing his
yellowed eyes through the screen door
to get the house cat.

THE THISTLE

torn off and brought down,
admired
and tossed on a shelf

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All night the jets hammering
above the house
all night the thistle
opening and opening

and now the first sun
flooding

everyone breathing
his own life

the house living

the refrigerator's
even pulsing
the water heater
yawning and
popping

the east windows
rubbed
open on the quicksilver
of the eucalyptus

Not snow but
seeds fallen
through the roof
of my life
on the stained table
the glass
the silent phone
the unanswerable letter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

E. M. CIORAN

Valéry Before His Idols

(*Mallarmé, Poe, Leonardo*)

To be understood is a veritable misfortune for a writer; it was Valéry's, both during his lifetime and afterward. Is it possible that he could have been as simple, as *penetrable* as all that? Surely not, but he was improvidently generous with information about his life and work, he divulged himself, he freely distributed keys, he dissipated a good many of those misunderstandings on which the secret prestige of a writer is founded; instead of leaving to others the labor of ferreting him out, he performed it himself, indulging to a fault his mania for self-explanation. His commentators thus found their burden singularly reduced: by initiating them straightaway into the nub of his preoccupations and gestures, he invited them to ponder not so much his work as his remarks about it. Subsequently, the goal of every enquiry concerning him was to learn whether, on a given point, he had been the victim of a delusion or, on the contrary, of *excessive* clairvoyance, but in either case of a judgment dissociated from the real. Not only was he his own commentator, his very works amount to an autobiography more or less camouflaged, a learned introspection, a *diary* of his mind, an elevation of his experience, however ordinary, to the rank of intellectual events, an inquisition against whatever traces of the *unreflected* he sensed within himself, a revolt against his depths.

Knowing how to dismantle the mechanism of a thing—everything being a mechanism, a sum of artifices, of gimmicks or, to use a more dignified term, of operations—getting at the springs, behaving like a clockmaker, peering *inside,* refusing to be a dupe, that is what counted in his view. Man, as he conceives him, is noteworthy only in proportion to his capacity for non-acquiescence, to the degree of lucidity he has achieved. This demand for lucidity brings to mind the *alertness* which underlies every spiritual experience, the measure of it being one's response to the para-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mount question: "How far have you progressed in your perception of unreality?"

One could trace in detail the parallelism between Valéry's quest for lucidity, which deliberately stops short of the absolute, and the quest for alertness with the absolute in view, which is an integral part of the mystical approach. Both methods involve an exacerbating of the conscious mind anxious to shake loose the illusions fastened to it. The merciless analyst, the denouncer of appearances, most especially the "nihilist," is an arrested mystic who recoils from giving content to his lucidity, from inflecting it toward salvation by having it serve some transcendental program. Valéry had been too contaminated by positivism to imagine any cult other than lucidity *for its own sake.*

"I confess that I have made an idol of my mind, but I have found none other to worship." Valéry never recovered from the amazement provoked by the spectacle of his mind. He admired only those who deified their own, and whose aspirations were so egregious that they could only fascinate or baffle. What seduced him in Mallarmé was the "madman" who, in 1885, wrote to Verlaine:

> . . . I have always dreamed and attempted something new, with an alchemist's patience, ready to sacrifice all vanity and satisfaction, as formerly one burned one's furniture and the beams of one's roof to feed the furnace of the Great Work. What is it? That is difficult to answer: a book, nothing more, multi-volumed, a book in the fullest sense however, architectural and premeditated, and not a collection of random inspirations, however marvelous. . . . I shall go even further and say The Book, persuaded as I am that at bottom there exists but one. . . .

Already in 1867 he had formulated, in a letter to Cazalis, the same grandiose and delirious wish: ". . . I should face the Supreme Disappearance with a twinge of remorse if I did so before completing my work, which is the Work, the Great Work as our forbears, the alchemists, used to say."

The idea of creating a work *rivalling* the world, not a reflection of it but a duplicate, stemmed less directly from the alchemists than from Hegel, the Hegel whom Mallarmé knew at one remove through Villiers, himself barely acquainted with the philosopher, though enough to quote him whenever the opportunity offered and to call him, pompously, "the reconstructor of the Universe,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a formula which must have struck Mallarmé, since the Book had as its purpose nothing less than the reconstruction of the Universe. But this idea could equally have been inspired by his acquaintance with music, by theories of the period derived from Schopenhauer and propagated by the Wagnerians who made of music the only art capable of translating the world's essence. Moreover, Wagner's very endeavor, like alchemy or Hegelianism, was apt to suggest great dreams and to encourage megalomania. A composer, and a prolific one at that, can, if so inclined, aspire to the role of a demiurge; but how can a poet, and one delicate to the point of sterility, make claims of that order without appearing ridiculous or mad? All this belongs to *divagation,* to use a word dear to Mallarmé. And it was precisely this which enabled him to attract and convince others. Valéry speaks as his successor and imitator in referring to the *Comedy* of the intellect which he intended to record one day. The dream of enormity easily leads to absolute illusion. When, on November 3, 1897, Mallarmé showed Valéry the corrected proofs of *Un Coup de Dés* and asked him: "Don't you find it a demented act?" the demented man was not Mallarmé but Valéry who, in a fit of sublimity, would later write that in this poem, whose typographic lay-out is so eccentric, the author had attempted "to give a printed page the power of the starry heavens." Assigning oneself a task impossible to complete and even to define, wishing vigor when one is being sapped by the subtlest of anaemias, implies a streak of the theatrical, a desire to fool oneself, to live beyond one's intellectual means, the determination to create a legend and above all a tragic failure: he who fails, provided he fails grandly, cuts a far more captivating figure than the man who has succeeded.

We have become increasingly interested not in what an author says but in what he would have liked to say, not in his acts but in his projects, less in his real work than in his fantasies. If Mallarmé grips us, it is because he answers all the conditions of the unfulfilled writer, unfulfilled when measured by the exorbitant ideal he set for himself, so exorbitant that one is sometimes inclined to call naive or fraudulent a man, who, in reality, was merely hallucinated. We are enthusiasts of the miscarriage, of the work abandoned in mid-course, impossible to complete, undermined by its very requirements. What makes this case anomalous is that the work was never even begun, since we have inherited practically no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

signs revealing the nature of the Book, that supposed rival of the universe: it is doubtful that the foundations were laid in the notes Mallarmé arranged to have destroyed, for those that survive do not merit close attention. Mallarmé: a stray impulse toward thought, a thought that never attained itself, waylaid by the contingent and the unreal, divorced from acts, hovering above all objects and, for that matter, all concepts . . . , an anticipation of thought. And what he, the enemy of vagueness, ultimately expressed was this very anticipation which is nothing if not vagueness. But vagueness—the space of enormity—has a positive side: it allows one *to think big.* It was by dreaming of the Book that Mallarmé achieved his uniqueness: had he been *saner,* he would have produced a prosaic body of work. As much can be said of Valéry, who is the outcome of the almost mythological view he had of his own mental processes, of what he would have extracted from them had he had the resources or the time to exploit them fully. Aren't his *Notebooks* the bric-a-brac of the Book which he, too, wished to set down in writing? He forged beyond Mallarmé, but was no more successful at ushering to its conclusion a plan which requires obstinacy and a great invulnerability to boredom, to that wound which, by his own admission, never ceased to pain him. Now boredom is discontinuity, the weariness with all sustained, solidly-grounded reasoning, the pulverized obsession, the horror of systems (the Book could only have been a system, a *total* system), horror of insistence, of an idea's *duration;* furthermore, boredom is the skit, the fragment, the note, the *notebook,* in short, dilettantism for lack of vitality, and also for fear of being or appearing *profound.* Valéry's attack on Pascal could be explained as a tantrum of modesty: is it not indecent to divulge one's secrets, one's anguish, one's abysses? Let us not forget that for a Mediterranean like Valéry, the *senses* counted, and that for him the basic categories were not what is and what is not, but what is not at all and what appears to be, Nothingness and Appearance; in his view, *being* as such lacked solidity, and even relevance. . . .

Both Mallarmé and Valéry were ill-equipped to undertake the Book. Poe, before them, would have been capable of conceiving such a project and setting about it; indeed, he did, *Eureka* being a kind of dead-end, a pole, a conclusion, a dream colossal and fulfilled: "I have resolved the secret of the Universe," "I no longer desire to live, since I have now written *Eureka*"—such exclama-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions as these Mallarmé would have liked to utter; he had scarcely any title to them, even after that magnificent impasse, *Un Coup de Dés*. Baudelaire had called Poe a "hero" of letters; Mallarmé will go further and call him "the absolute literary case." The fact that nowadays no one would ratify that judgment is unimportant, the reality of an individual, as of an era, lying in its exaggerations, in its capacity to overestimate its gods. The unending series of literary or philosophic fashions attests to an irresistible need to worship: who hasn't been an hagiographer on occasion? The sceptic will always find somebody more sceptical than he to venerate. Even in the eighteenth century, when sarcasm became institutionalized, the "decadence of admiration" was never so widespread as Montesquieu fancied.

For Valéry, the theme treated in *Eureka* fell within the domain of literature. "Cosmogony is a literary genre remarkable alike in its persistence and its variety, one of the oldest genres extant." He held the same view of history and even philosophy, "a special kind of literary genre, characterized by certain subjects and the recurrence of certain terms and forms." One could argue that, excepting the positive sciences, everything for him boiled down to literature, to something dubious if not contemptible. Yet was there anyone more *literary* than he, anyone who paid such abiding attention to language, who idolized as he did the spoken word? Narcissus at odds with himself, he disdained the sole activity compatible with his nature: *predestined* to the Word, he was essentially a literary man, yet would have like to stifle, to destroy this literary man; failing that, he avenged himself on literature, disparaging it in every way. Such would seem to be the psychological diagram of his relationship with it.

Eureka did not figure crucially in Valéry's evolution. On the other hand, "The Philosophy of Composition" is a major event, an encounter of capital importance. In it are to be found all the ideas he later promulgated about the poetic act. He must have been ecstatic on reading that the composition of "The Raven" can in no way be attributed to chance or intuition, that the poem was conceived with "the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem."

But "The Philosophy of Composition" was one of Poe's mystifications: all of Valéry sprang from a naive understanding of it, from his enthusiasm for a text in which a poet was poking fun at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his credulous readers. That he supported with such juvenile ardor a demonstration fundamentally anti-poetic proves that at the outset, deep down, Valéry was not a poet, for otherwise his whole being would have rebelled against this cold, pitiless dismantling of delirium, against this indictment of the most basic poetic reflex, of poetry's *raison d'être;* undoubtedly he needed this cunning incrimination, this trial of all spontaneous creation to justify, to excuse his own lack of spontaneity. What could be more reassuring than this learned exposition of the *Working*? Here was a catechism not for poets but for versifiers which was bound to flatter the virtuoso in Valéry, his penchant for intellectual one-upmanship, for art at one remove, for art *in* art—this religion of the niggling, as well as his determination to stand, at every moment, outside all lapses of reason, poetic or otherwise. Only a maniac of lucidity could relish this cynical trek backward to the sources of the poem, which contradicts every law of literary production, this infinitely fussy pre-meditation, these unheard-of acrobatics from which Valéry derived the first article of his poetic credo. He elevated into a theory his inaptitude for being a poet naturally, and proposed it as a model, he fastened to a technique in order to hide his congenital defects, he placed—an unforgivable crime—poetics above poetry. There is reason to believe that all his theses would have been quite different had he been capable of producing a less intricate body of work. He endorsed the difficult out of *impotence:* all his requirements are those of an artist, not of a poet. What was merely a game in Poe becomes a dogma in Valéry, a literary dogma, which is to say an *accepted* fiction. As a good technician, he tried to rehabilitate procedure and skill at the expense of *gift.* From every theory (in art that is), he sought to extract the most unpoetic conclusion, and to it he would hold fast, seduced as he was, to the point of obnubilation, by *craft,* by invention devoid of fatality, of the ineluctable, of destiny. He always believed that one could have been someone else, and he always wanted to be someone else, witness his gnawing regret at not having become a scientist, which led him to advance a good many extravagant notions, especially in esthetics; this regret was equally responsible for his condescending attitude toward literature: it is as if he were lowering himself whenever he speaks about it, as if he were merely deigning to devote himself to verse; in point of fact, his devotion to it was really *exertion,* as he himself often

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stated. At least the non-poet in him, by preventing him from mixing verse and prose, from wanting, like the symbolists, to fabricate poetry at all costs and everywhere, preserved him from the scourge of prose too ostensibly poetic. Studying a mind as sharp as Valéry's, one experiences rare delight in laying bare his illusions and flaws which, if not obvious, are nonetheless real, absolute lucidity being incompatible with existence, with breathing. And it must be recognized that the disabused mind, however complete its emancipation from the world, lives more or less in the unbreathable.

Poe and Mallarmé exist for Valéry; clearly, Leonardo is but a pretext, a name and nothing more, a contrived figure, a chimera who possesses all the powers one does not have and would like to have. He answers the need to see oneself achieved, the full-blown embodiment of an imaginary creature resuming whatever illusions one has ever entertained about oneself: a hero who has vanquished your own impossibilities, who has redeemed you from your limits, transcending them *in your place*. . . .

The *Introduction to Leonardo's Method,* written in 1894, proves that Valéry, from the beginning of his career, was perfect, by which I mean perfectly matured as a writer: he was spared the chore of bettering himself, of making progress. His case is not unlike that of another Corsican, who declared in St. Helena: "War is a singular art: I assure you that I fought sixty battles; well, in them I learned nothing I hadn't already known from the first." Valéry, in later life, could have argued that he, too, *knew* everything from the time of his first endeavor and that, so far as the demands he placed on himself and his work were concerned, he had satisfied them by the time he was twenty. At an age when one is still groping and aping everybody, he had found his manner, his style, his form of thought. If he admired others, he did so *as a master.* Like all perfect minds, his was *limited,* that is, restricted to certain themes beyond which he could not venture. It was perhaps in reaction against himself, against his all-too-perceptible boundaries, that he became so intrigued by that phenomenon, the universal mind, by the almost inconceivable possibility of multiple talents flowering in harmony, co-existing without annulling one another. He couldn't not *meet* Leonardo; Leibniz would have been more appropriate, but dealing with Leibniz required,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in addition to such scientific competence and knowledge as Valéry lacked, the kind of impersonal curiosity of which he was incapable. Leonardo, the symbol of a civilization, of a universe, or of anything whatever, proved more amenable to arbitrariness and nonchalance. If people cited him occasionally, they would do so the better to pronounce their own tastes and aversions, to settle accounts with the philosophers by introducing the name of a man who, all by himself, accumulated spheres of knowledge which none of them had ever brought together. For Valéry, the problems to which philosophy addresses itself, and its manner of posing them, amounted to mere "abuses of language," problems at once false, pointless and interchangeable, lacking any rigor, either verbal or intrinsic; it seemed to him that an idea became perverted directly the philosophers seized it; worse yet, *thought* itself was contaminated on contact with them. His horror of philosophical jargon is so convincing, so contagious that one shares it forever, one can no longer read a *serious* philosopher without caution or distaste, and one therefore boggles at every spuriously mystical or learned term. The bulk of philosophy constitutes a crime of lèse-language, a crime against the Word. Every *academic* expression should be proscribed and classed as a misdemeanor. He is unconsciously dishonest who, to cut through some difficulty or to resolve a problem, forges a sonorous, pretentious word or just a word. In a letter to the great linguist, F. Brunot, Valéry wrote: ". . . it takes more intelligence to do without a word than to introduce one." If one translated the lucubrations of philosophers into *normal* language, what would remain of them? The enterprise would prove the undoing of the majority. But it must straightaway be added that writers, most particularly a Valéry, would not come off any better: if one removed the glitter from his prose, if one reduced any one of his thoughts to its skeletal outline, what would it then be worth? He, too, was a dupe of language, of *another* language, more *real,* more existent to be sure. He did not forge new words, true, but he virtually ensconced himself within his own language, so that what superiority he enjoyed over philosophers consisted in his participating in an unreality less radical than theirs. By criticizing them so severely, he showed that he, usually so prudent, could get carried away, could delude himself. It was this capacity for delusion, moreover, which preserved not only the "man of thought," as he liked to call himself, but even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more important the juggler, the virtuoso of words. He never attained that "imperturbable clear-sightedness" of which he dreamed, and it was a good thing he didn't, for then his "silence" might have lasted until death.

On closer scrutiny, his aversion for philosophers seems tainted; the fact is, he was *haunted* by them, he could not be indifferent to them, he dogged them with irony verging on a snarl. Throughout his life, he forbade himself from wanting to construct a system, yet more or less consciously, he harbored a longing for the system he was not able to construct, as he did for science. Hatred of philosophy is always suspect; it seems endemic to people who cannot forgive themselves for not having become philosophers and, bent on hiding this regret or incapacity, do so by bullying those who, less scrupulous or more gifted than they, had the luck to erect the implausible little universe which is a well-articulated philosophical doctrine. One can appreciate that a "thinker" may envy the philosopher he might have been, but it is more difficult to understand why this envy should beset poets to an even greater extent—one thinks again of Mallarmé, since the Book could only have been the work of a philosopher. The prestige of rigor, of thought *devoid of charm!* If poets are so sensitive to this, it is out of a kind of shame of living uninhibitedly as parasites of the Improbable.

The philosophy of professors is one thing; metaphysics is another. One might have expected of Valéry more indulgence for the latter. Far from it. He denounces it insidiously and all but treats it, like the logical positivists, with whom he had many affinities, as an "illness of language." He even made it a point of honor to ridicule metaphysical anxiety (parenthetically, man's only *excuse,* the one thing capable of absolving him in his own eyes). Pascal's torments elicit from him the reflections of an engineer: "No revelations for Leonardo. No sheer drops to his right. The abyss would make him think of a bridge. An abyss could serve for the testing of some big mechanical bird." Reading such unforgivably cavalier remarks, one is reduced to a single idea: throw everything aside and *avenge* Pascal. What sense does it make to reproach him for having abandoned science, when this abandonment was the result of a spiritual *awakening* far more important than whatever scientific discoveries lay in the offing? In absolute terms, Pascalian perplexities, bordering on prayer, out-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weigh any secret he might have torn from the exterior world. Every *objective* conquest pre-supposes an inner loss of ground. When man will have reached the goal he has assigned himself—subjugating Creation—he will find himself completely empty, at once ghost and God. To scientism, the great illusion of modern times, Valéry subscribed without reservations. Is it mere coincidence that, as a young man in Montpellier, he occupied the same room in which, many years before, Auguste Comte, the theoretician and prophet of scientism, had lived?

Of all superstitions, that of science is the least original. One can no doubt devote oneself to scientific activity, but enthusiasm for it, *when it isn't one's line,* is, at the very least, embarrassing. Valéry created his own legend of poet-mathematician. And everybody swallowed it, although he himself recognized, in another connection, that he was but "an unhappy lover of the queen of sciences" and declared to Frédéric Lefèvre that when young he could not enter the navy because of his "absolute incomprehension of mathematical science; I didn't understand a thing. For me it was stranger, more impenetrable, more exasperating than anything in the world. No one had less understanding of the existence and almost the possibility of mathematics, even its simplest branches." That he subsequently acquired a taste for it is indubitable, but acquiring a taste and acquiring knowledge are very different things. He took an interest in it either to create for himself an unexcelled intellectual status, out of desire to set himself up as the hero of a drama taxing the limits of his mental powers, or else to enter a realm wherein one no longer stumbles over oneself at every turn. "There are no words to convey the serenity that comes of knowing that there is an entire world from which the Self is absent." Was he acquainted with Sophie Kowalevsky's observation about mathematics? Perhaps it was an analogous need which carried him toward a discipline so far removed from every form of narcissism. If, however, you do not allow that he was moved by any such profound necessity, then his relationship with science brings to mind the infatuation of those Enlightenment ladies whom he describes in his preface to *The Persian Letters,* hanging around laboratories and swooning over anatomy or astronomy. One must grant, to his credit, that the tone of his scientific commentaries has in it something of the pre-revolutionary gentleman; a last echo of the vanished salon. One can also detect,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in his pursuit of the imponderable, a trace of masochism: worshipping what he will never attain in order to torture himself, punishing himself for being, where knowledge is concerned, a rank amateur.

The only problems he handled as an initiate are those of form or, more exactly, of writing. "A syntactic genius": Claudel's description of Mallarmé sits just as well, if not better, on Valéry who admitted owing to Mallarmé the principle of "conceiving and placing above *all works* the conscious possession of the function of language and the feeling of a superior freedom of expression next to which thought is a mere incident, a particular event." Valéry's cult of rigor does not go beyond the appropriateness of terms and the conscious striving for an *abstract* brilliance in sentences. Rigor of form, not of matter. The *Jeune Parque* is said to have required more than a hundred drafts: the author is proud of it, offering this statistic as proof of a rigorous method. Leaving nothing to improvisation or inspiration (odious synonyms in his view), supervising words, weighing them, never forgetting that language is the one and only reality—all this characterized his will to expression, carried to such extremes that it turns into hair-splitting, into an exhausting quest for infinitesimal precision. Valéry is a galley-slave of the Nuance.

He advanced to the most remote limits of language where, dangerously tenuous, it is but *essence* of lace, the last degree *before* unreality. It would be impossible to imagine a language more chastened than his, more miraculously bloodless. Why deny that in more than one instance it is over-elaborate or clearly precious? He himself held preciosity in high regard, as this significant avowal indicates: "Who knows if Molière did not cost us some Shakespeare because of the ridicule he heaped on the *précieux*?" The grievance one can level at preciosity is that it makes the writer too conscious, too imbued with his superiority over his instrument: by virtue of playing it and handling it with virtuosity, he evicts from language its mystery and vigor. Now language must have *resistance:* if it yields, if it bends completely to the whims of a prestidigitator, it ends up a mere series of pirouettes and conceits in which it triumphs over itself at every moment and splits into mutually destructive fractions. Preciosity is the *writing of writing:* a divided style which becomes the object of its own quest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It would all in all be excessive to consider Valéry a precious writer, but correct to say that he has *fits* of preciosity, which was quite natural in someone who saw nothing behind language, no substratum or residue of reality. Only words save us from nothingness, such would seem to be the *rock-bottom* of his thought, though rock-bottom is something whose existence he rejected both metaphysically and rhetorically. The fact remains that he wagered his all on words and thereby proved that he still believed in something. Had he ended up by estranging himself from them, only then could one treat him as a "nihilist." In any case he couldn't be a nihilist, for he was too sensitive to the necessity of lying in life. "One would lose courage without the support of false ideas," said Fontenelle, the writer to whom, by virtue of the grace with which he enhanced his every idea, Valéry resembles most closely.

Poetry is *threatened* when poets evince too keen a theoretical interest in language and make of it a constant subject of meditation, when they confer upon it an exceptional status which derives less from esthetics than from theology. The obsession with language, always lively in France, has never been so virulent and sterilizing as it is today with the means, the intermediary of thought on the verge of being promoted into the sole object of thought, indeed, into a substitute for the absolute, not to mention God. There is no such thing as thought alive and fertile, with purchase in reality, when the word brutally substitutes itself for the idea, when the vehicle counts more than its freight, when the instrument of thought is incorporated into thought itself. Thought is genuine only if it *adheres* to the mind; when independent of it, when outside it, it leaves the mind hobbled from the start, peering into a void, and reduced to itself, instead of drawing upon the world for its substance or pretexts. Let the writer beware of reflecting too closely on language, let him avoid, at all costs, making it the matter of his obsessions, let him not forget that important works were created *in spite of* language. A Dante was obsessed by what he had to say, not by the *saying* of it. Long ago, from the start one is tempted to argue, French literature seems to have succumbed to the spell, to the despotism of the Word, whence its thinness, its fragility, its extreme refinement, and also its mannered personality. Mallarmé and Valéry crown a tradition and prefigure a bankruptcy; both are final symptoms of a *grammarian* nation. One

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

linguist could even affirm that Mallarmé treated French as a dead language, "which he had never heard spoken." It should be added that he had a slight streak of affectation, of the "canny and tongue-in-cheek Parisian," as Claudel noted, a hint of very lofty "charlatanism," the lassitude of a man who has seen everything—features we shall encounter again, more salient, in the Valéry of "the indefinite refusal to be *anything* whatever," the key-formula of his intellectual method, the guiding principle, the rule and motto of his mind. And indeed, Valéry will never be *whole,* he will never identify himself either with beings or things, he will be *aside,* on the periphery of everything, not at all owing to some metaphysical malaise, but to excessive meditation on the operations, on the functioning of the conscious mind. The dominant idea, the idea which gives meaning to all his experiments, pivots on the distance from which the conscious mind views itself, the *awareness of awareness,* such as Valéry depicts it, chiefly in *Note and Digression,* written in 1919, his "philosophical" masterpiece where, seeking among our sensations and judgments an *invariable,* he finds it not in our changing personality but in the pure *I,* "universal pronoun," "which has no history" and which is, in short, but an exacerbation of awareness, a boundary-line-existence, semi-fictitious, devoid of all determinate content and totally unrelated to the psychological subject. This sterile self, a sum of rejections, the quintessence of nothing, an aware void (not awareness of the void but a void which knows itself and rejects the accidents and vicissitudes of the contingent subject), this self, the ultimate stage of lucidity, of a lucidity distilled and purified of all complicity with objects and events, lies at the antipode of the Self—infinite productivity, cosmogonic force—as German romanticism had conceived it.

Awareness intervenes in our acts only to disrupt their execution, awareness is a perpetual doubting of life, and perhaps its ruination. *"Bewusstsein als Verhängnis,"* Awareness as Fatality, is the title of a book which appeared in Germany between the two wars, whose author, suffering the consequences of his world vision, killed himself. Clearly, there is, in the phenomenon of awareness, a dimension deadly and dramatic which did not escape Valéry (think of the "murderous lucidity" of *The Soul and the Dance*), but he could not insist on it too strenuously without contradicting his usual theme, that awareness—unlike the trance, whose char-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

acter he found dubious—plays a beneficent role in literary creation: his entire poetics is nothing if not the apotheosis of awareness. Had he lingered over the tension between Awareness and the Life Force, he might have had to invert the scale of values he set up and defended throughout his career.

The effort to define oneself, to dwell on one's own mental operations represented for Valéry true knowledge. But *knowing oneself* is not *knowing*, or rather, it is but one variety of knowing. Valéry always confused *knowledge* and *clear-sightedness*. And in him, the will to be clear-sighted, to be inhumanly disabused, goes hand in hand with a thinly disguised pride: he knows himself and he admires himself for knowing himself. Let us be fair: it is not that he admires his mind—he admires himself insofar as he *is* Mind. His narcissism, inseparable from what he designated as "emotions" and "pathos" of the intellect, is not a narcissism of private diaries, it is not the attachment to oneself as a *unique* aberration, nor is it the self of those who like to brood on their ailments; no, it is, to be more precise, an abstract self: the self of an abstract individual, far from the indulgences of introspection or the impurities of psychoanalysis. Let us note that the disease of Narcissus was in no way consubstantial with him: otherwise, how explain that the sole domain in which posterity has proven him strikingly right is that of political considerations and prognoses? History, the idol he sought to demolish, is largely responsible for his enduring, for what currency he enjoys—his remarks bearing on it are those most often quoted: an irony which he might have appreciated. His poems are questioned, his poetics rejected, but as moralist and analyst attentive to events he is granted more and more authority. This self-lover had the makings of an extrovert. One senses that appearances did not displease him, that with him nothing assumed a morbid, profound, consummately private aspect, and that even the Void, which he inherited from Mallarmé, was merely a fascination exempt from vertigo, and by no means an opening onto horror or ecstasy. It is written, in I forget which Upanishad, that "the essence of man is the word, the essence of the word is the hymn." Valéry would have subscribed to the first assertion and denied the second. It is in this assent and this refusal that one must look for the key to his accomplishments and his limits.

[*Translated by Frederick Brown*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

W. H. AUDEN

Valéry: L'Homme d'esprit

To discuss literature written in any tongue other than one's own is a questionable undertaking, but for an English-speaking writer to discuss a French writer borders on folly, for no two languages could be more different.

To discover the essential and unique qualities of a language, one must go to its poetry for it is the poet, as Valéry says, who attempts to remove all the noises from speech leaving only the sounds. The conventions of a poetry, its prosodic rules, the kinds of verbal ornamentation, rhymes, alliterations, etc., which it encourages or condemns can tell us much about the way in which a native ear draws this distinction. I very much doubt whether a Frenchman can ever learn really to hear a line of English verse—think of Baudelaire and Poe—and I am perfectly certain that no Englishman can learn to hear French poetry correctly. When I hear a native recite German or Spanish or Italian poetry, I believe, however mistakenly, that I hear more or less what he hears, but if the reciter is French, I know I am hearing nothing of the sort. I know, in an academic way, the rules of Classical French verse, but the knowledge does not change my habit of hearing. For example, to my ear, trained on English verse, the prevailing rhythm of the French alexandrine sounds like the anapaestic rhythm of

> The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold.

thus

> *Jĕ sŭis bēlle,| ŏ mŏrtēls! | cŏmme ŭn rêv|ĕ dĕ pierre*

I know this is all wrong but it is what I hear.[1] Further, most unfortunately, the nature of the English language forbids the use of anapaests for tragic subjects. I am convinced that, when he goes to hear *Phèdre* at the Comédie Française, an Englishman, however well he may know French, however much he admire the extraordinary varied and subtle delivery of the cast, cannot help finding Racine comic.

[1] Another difficulty for my ear is the caesura; an English poet works just as hard to vary its position from line to line as a French poet works to keep it in the same few places.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I have known Valéry's poem *Ebauche d'un serpent* for over twenty-five years, re-read it often with increasing admiration and, as I thought, comprehension, only to discover the other day, on reading a letter by the poet to Alain, that I had missed the whole point, namely, that the tone of the poem is burlesque, that the assonances and alliterations are deliberately exaggerated, and that the serpent is intended to sound like Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger.*

How could I, to whose ear all French verse sounds a bit exaggerated, hope to get this?

In prose, the difficulties of communication, though not so formidable, are still serious enough. It is not just a matter of the obvious translator's headaches, that there is no English equivalent to *esprit,* for instance, or that *"amour"* and "love" are not synonymous, but of the entirely different rhetorical structure of French and English prose, so that an English reader may entirely ignore some important effect and be over-impressed by another.

In writing about Valéry, therefore, I can only console myself with the thought that, if the Valéry I admire is in large measure a creation of my own, the man who wrote—"The proper object of thought is that which does not exist"—would be the first to appreciate the joke.

From the age of twenty, Valéry made it his daily habit to rise before dawn and spend two or three hours studying the interior maneuvers of his freshly-awoken mind. This habit became a physiological need so that, if circumstance made him miss these hours of introspection, he felt out of sorts for the rest of the day. The observations he made during this period he wrote down in notebooks, without a thought, he says, of their ever being read by another. From time to time, however, he was persuaded to publish selections. The reluctance he expresses seems more prima-donnaish than real.

> Je n'aurais jamais imaginé que je dusse un jour imprimer tels quels ces fragments. Monsieur le docteur Ludo van Bogaert et Monsieur Alexandre Stols l'ont imaginé pour moi. Ils m'ont tenté par la considération de l'intimité de cette petite entreprise, et par la perfection des spécimens typographiques qu'ils m'ont soumis.
>
> *
>
> Il faut se prêter quelquefois aux monstrueux désirs des amateurs du spontané et des idées à l'état brut.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This does not ring quite true, especially when one finds him writing privately to a friend (Paul Souday) that he considers his notebooks his real *oeuvre*.

In any case, we may be very glad that he overcame his reluctance, for, taken together, these notes form one of the most interesting and original documents of "the inner life" in existence.

Most of such documents are concerned with the so-called "personal," that is, with the confession of sins and vices, memories of childhood, the feelings of the subject about God, the weather, his mistress, gossip, self-reproach, and the ordinary motive for producing them is a desire to demonstrate that their author is more interesting, more unique, more *human* than other folks.

For the personal in this sense, Valéry had nothing but contempt. It is in what they show, he believed, that men differ; what they hide is always the same. Confession, therefore, is like undressing in public; everyone knows what he is going to see. Further, a man's secrets are often much more apparent to others than to himself.

One of Gide's most obvious traits, for example, was his tightfistedness; after reading his journals, one is curious to know if he was aware of this.

A cultivation of memory for its own sake, as in Proust, was incomprehensible to Valéry, who preferred to forget everything in his past that was just a picture, retaining only what he could assimilate and convert into an element of his present mental life. As for confiding one's sufferings to paper, he thought it responsible for all the worst books.

The task which Valéry set himself was to observe the human mind in the action of thinking; the only mind that he can observe is, of course, his own, but this is irrelevant. He is not a philosopher, except in the etymological meaning of that word, nor a psychologist in so far as psychology is concerned with hidden depths—for Valéry, humanity is confined to the skin and consciousness; below that is physiological machinery—but an amazingly keen and *rusé* observer of conscious processes of thinking. For this neither a special talent, like a talent for mathematics, nor esoteric learning is required, but only what might be called intellectual virtue, which it is possible for every man to develop, if he chooses.

For the cultivation of such an *Ethique sportive,* as Valéry

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

once called it, one must develop a vigilance that immediately distinguishes between fictions and real psychic events, between the seen, the thought, the reasoned and the felt, and a precision of description that resists all temptation to fine literary effects. Hence Valéry's repeated attacks on the popular notion of "profundity." A thought, he says, can properly be called profound only if it profoundly changes a question or a given situation, and such a thought is never found at the bottom of the mind which contains only a few stock proverbs. Most people call something profound, not because it is near some important truth but because it is distant from ordinary life. Thus, darkness is profound to the eye, silence to the ear; what-is-not is the profundity of what-is. This kind of profundity is a literary effect, which can be calculated like any other literary effect, and usually deplorable. For Valéry, Pascal's famous remark about the silence of the eternal spaces is a classic instance of literary vanity passing itself off as observation. If Pascal was genuinely interested in stating a truth, then why, Valéry maliciously asks, did he not also write: *"Le vacarme intermittent des petits coins où nous vivons nous rassure"*?

After reading his notebooks, we know no more about Valéry as a person than before—we are not told, for example, that he suffered from depressions—he has only shown us that he was a good observer and that he expressed his observations in precise language. To judge if his observations are true or false, we have only to repeat the experiment on ourselves. For instance, he says that it is impossible consciously to put a distance between oneself and an object without turning round to see if one is succeeding. I try, and I find that Valéry is right.

Valéry's attitude to life is more consistent than he admits, and begins with a conviction of the essential inconsistency of the mind and the need to react against it. The following three notes might be taken as mottoes for all his work.

> La conscience règne et ne gouverne pas.
>
> *
>
> Parfois je pense; et parfois, je suis.
>
> *
>
> Je n'invoque que ce hasard qui fait le fond de tous les esprits; et puis, un travail opiniâtre qui est contre ce hasard même.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Valéry's observations cover a wide range of subjects. As one might expect, the least interesting, the ones in which he sounds least like Valéry and most like just one more French writer of mordant aphorisms, are those concerned with love, self-love, good and evil.

He has extremely interesting things to say about our consciousness of our bodies, about those curious psycho-physical expressions, laughing, crying, and blushing, about the physical behaviour of people when they are concentrating on a mental problem. He is excellent on dreams—he observes, for instance, that in dreams there is "practically no present tense." But for poets, naturally, and for many others too, I believe, his most valuable contributions are his remarks on the art of poetry. A critic who does not himself write poetry may be an admirable judge of what is good and bad, but he cannot have a first-hand knowledge of how poetry is written, so that not infrequently he criticizes, favorably or unfavorably, some poem for achieving or failing to achieve something that the poet was not interested in doing. Many poets have written defenses of poetry against charges that it is untrue or immoral, but surprisingly few have told us how they wrote. There are two reasons for this: the poets are more interested in writing more poems and, less laudably, they, like lawyers and doctors, have a snobbish reluctance to show the laity the secrets of their mystery. Behind this snobbery, of course, lies the fear that, if the general public knew what goes on, that a poem is not sheer logomancy, for instance, or that an intensely expressive love poem does not necessarily presuppose a poet intensely in love, that public would lose even the little respect for poets that it has.

It is unfortunate that one of Valéry's few predecessors, Poe, should have used as his case history of composition a poem, "The Raven," which does strike the reader as "contrived" in a bad way, which means that it is not contrived enough. The form Poe employed for the poem, which demands many feminine rhymes, has in English a frivolous effect out of key with the subject. A reader, who wishes to cling to a more magical view of the poetic process, can find reasons to confirm his illusion. Valéry's achievements as a poet make his critical doctrines harder to wish away. His statements are obviously intended to be polemical. He dislikes two kinds of writers, those who try to impress with sonorous or violent vagueness, and naturalistic writers who would simply record what the camera sees or their stream of accidental thoughts. For Valéry,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all loud and violent writing is comic, like a man alone in a room playing a trombone. When one reads Carlyle, for instance, one gets the impression that he had persuaded himself that it takes more effort, more *work,* to write *fortissimo* than *piano,* or *universe* than *garden.*

Of the Zola school of naturalism Valéry disposes very neatly, by asking what kinds of scents perfumers would bottle if they adopted this aesthetic.

For Valéry, a poem ought to be a festival of the intellect, that is, a game, but a solemn, ordered and significant game, and a poet is someone to whom arbitrary difficulties suggest ideas. It is the glory of poetry that the lack of a single word can ruin everything, that the poet cannot continue until he discovers a word, say, in two syllables, containing P or F, synonymous with *breaking-up,* yet not too uncommon. The formal restrictions of poetry teach us that the thoughts which arise from our needs, feelings and experiences are only a small part of the thoughts of which we are capable. In any poem some lines were "given" the poet, which he then tried to perfect, and others which he had to calculate and at the same time make them sound as "natural" as possible. It is more becoming in a poet to talk of versification than of mysterious voices, and his genius should be so well hidden in his talent that the reader attributes to his art what comes from his nature.

Needless to say, Valéry found very little in the French poetry of his age which seemed to him anything more than a worship of chance and novelty, and concluded that poetry was a freak survival, that no one today would be capable of arriving at the notion of verse if it were not already there.

In his general principles I am convinced that Valéry is right past all possibility of discussion, but I cannot help wondering if I should also agree in daily practice as much as I do, if I were a Frenchman trying to write French poetry. For polemical reasons, probably, Valéry overstresses, I think, the arbitrariness of poetic formal restrictions, and overdramatises the opposition between them and the "Natural." If they really were purely arbitrary, then the prosodies of different languages would be interchangeable, and the experience which every poet has had, of being unable to get on with a poem because he was trying to use the "wrong" form for this particular poem until, having found the right form, the *natu-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ral form, composition proceeded freely, would be unknown. While it is true that nothing which is without effort and attention is likely to be of much value, the reverse proposition is not true: it would take an immense effort, for example, to write half a dozen rhopalic hexameters in English, but it is virtually certain that the result would have no poetic merit.

To an English poet, French poetry seems to suffer from a lack of formal variety, as did English poetry between 1680 and 1780. Any form, be it the French alexandrine or the English heroic couplet, however admirable a vehicle originally, tends to exhaust its possibilities in the hands of two or three masters, and their successors must either find quite different forms or be doomed to remain epigoni. If it is rare to find a modern French poem that is not written in free verse (and one must not forget that Valéry himself wrote quite a lot of what he called *Poésie brute*), while formal poems are still common in modern English poetry, the lack of resilience in the official forms of French verse may be partly responsible.[2] By comparison with French, English seems an anarchic amateur language, but this very anarchy, if it stimulates the proper revolt against it, can give rise to new and living structures. Would Valéry, I sometimes patriotically wonder, have finished his poetic career so soon if he had had the vast resources of *our* tongue, with all the prosodic possibilities which its common syllables permit, to play with?

But then, of course, we might not have got the notebooks. It is fitting that the man whose critical banner might well have carried the devise *Vade retro, Musa,* should have written *Tes pas, enfants de mon silence,* one of the most beautiful invocations to the Muse in any language. His worshiped Muse, whom he sometimes called Laura, was not, perhaps, the Muse of poetry or, if so, only accidentally, but the Muse of insight and self-renewal whom he daily expected in the dawn hours.

> Mon esprit pense à mon esprit.
> Mon histoire m'est étrangère.
> Mon nom m' étonne et mon corps est idée.

[2] About some things it would seem that French taste is more indulgent than English. Thus Valéry, while admitting that De Vigny's line *"J'aime la majesté des souffrances humaines"* is nonsense, allows it, nevertheless, because of the beautiful sound. An English poet could never get away with a similar line.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ce que je fus est avec tous les autres.
Et je ne suis même pas ce que je vais être.

Aside from the money, literary success can give but small satisfaction to an author, even to his vanity. For what does literary success mean? To be condemned by persons who have not read his works and to be imitated by persons devoid of talent. There are only two kinds of literary glory that are worth winning but the writer who wins either will never know. One is to have been the writer, perhaps a quite minor one, in whose work some great master generations later finds an essential clue for solving some problem; the other is to become for someone else an example of the dedicated life, *"d'être invoqué secrètement, d'être imaginé et placé par un inconnu dans ses pensées les plus mystérieuses pour lui servir de témoin, de maître, de juge, de père et de contrainte sacrée."* It was this role, rather than that of a literary influence, which Mallarmé played in Valéry's life, and I can vouch for at least one life in which Valéry does likewise. Whenever I am more than usually tormented by one of those horrid mental imps, *Contradiction, Obstination, Imitation, Lapsus, Brouillamini, Fange-d'Ame,* whenever I feel myself in danger of becoming *un homme sérieux,* it is on Valéry, *un homme d'esprit* if ever there was one, more often than on any other poet, I believe, that I call for aid.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DANIEL HOFFMAN

Broken Laws

1

Under flat stones beside the creek
In their small damp lairs
The newts are keeping
Their cool,

Clenched fronds
Thrust uncurling
Through the dead leafmould

And the creek burbles
Louder than it has all winter,
Burbles with snow-melt and the run-off
After three days of rain.

The wind wrinkles now
With near-forgotten odors.
Something is about to happen,

Even those who've never seen it before
Know what to do.

2

Among the bedsprings
Rusted cans
Cardboard boxes pulped by rain

Settling on the raw dirt beside
Old bottles rags torn newspapers
And a headless rubber doll

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The daisies cluster in the sun

Nodding or swaying as the wind sways
And the wide gaze of their yellow stare
Ringed with white rays
Fixes the center of the scene.

3

Waiting for the stones to ripen

The sun will lean
Down to touch the day
That lets us in

On what I am sent
Here to do

4

Looking up I see
That in the moon's absence
Once again

The stars
Are defining themselves
By their own lights.

They have been doing
This for a long time.

Any questions
Of identity
Or intention
Or the purpose of it all

Will have to be referred
To me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5

It is so still you
Hear the crinkle of the stars
Beneath the Milky Way switch
OFF/ON. OFF/ON. Nothing
Wrinkles the silence, only
Noise of light

Incalculable millions
Of stars of years away

Until the sharp-
Smelling vixen's bark
Breaks over the huddled
Boulders, answered
By a wilder yowl or
Echo from the hill—

Questions of the cosmos are displaced by this.
In which burrow crouches the next meal?

6.

The man in the summer
Cottage down the road is
Dying.
It's cancer. He's

Aged a dozen years
Since last year. Still,
On brisk days he wears
His jaunty sweater

With the embroidered badge
That spells "Admiral."
His wife is the one
Now who drives

The car—at the Yacht
Club they say it will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Be a miracle
If he survives

Till Fall and how can he spend
The summer here, as though
The next breath of wind might not
Be the end?

7

Suppose that at the end of it
You recognize in
A thunderclap
Or a spark gap
What it was

That brought you to that end
What it is that out
Of the tedium of your doubt
You must affirm and bend
Your restless will to

What a time to amend
Your meandering along the rows
Of days like bushes bent
With blueberries or spined
With your basket nearly empty still to find

This is no mere
Berry feast or picnic where
The deer trampled the grass
Or where hungry you slept
On bare ground you kept

On the necessary way not
Observing the celebrations
Of the stations
You were sent to or what image
Devised all that you do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

8

When the water holds so still
That every cloud
Boat and island shimmers upright in
Images of those
Sails clouds bluffs now seen as
Perfect in the sea

—A day with no circumference
Hung like the sound
Rung from a bell of light no motion save
The squall of gulls
In the only circles over
Islands far away

An exhalation of eternity
Desiring nothing—
We startle from this trussed in time
A sack of skin
Drawn over breath enough to last from our
First gulp to dying day.

9

Tonight a skein of wild geese
Churns the fading air.
With broken cries

The clattering wedge of their huge wings
Splits the sky
Rushing Northward, followed by

The laggard few
Who heed exultant summons
Of that harsh cortège—

Breasting a wind that thickens,
Darker, they batter their way.
These

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Could not hang back
At that call
But leapt

Finding at last their
Longed-for freedom, losing
Everything for this.

10

Watching, listening
To the flight
Of the wind, the seasons

Of the night,
We stand astonished once again
By the grandeur of the world

Outside ourselves, our eyes
Enclosing at a glance
The flocks' mysterious return

And the falling
Stars among the stars that hold
Perpetual places on our mythic charts

Of monsters, queens, and murderers
Of monsters—or are those bold
Points the rusted holes

Made by spots of purer dew
Than any we shall walk upon
Piercing the sooty kettle of the sky

So that original light
Pours through in flecks like stars
Toward which we hurtle in our flight?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

Not likely there, though,
The fulfilment of desire
Promised in

Commandments spelt
On the black basalt
Tablets of our nights,

Inscribed on limestone days.
Their invocation says,
"THOU SHALT. . ."

We seek them by what light
Slips through the panes
Of dream windows

Wavering
While the moon in her own image
Creates the changed world anew

Then melts as dew
Dries at the coming
Of another light

Blazing
Across our bed,
Our breakfast table,

Coloring our walls, our lawn,
The busy schedule our fading
Dreams bequeath,

The broken laws
Almost deciphered on
This air we breathe.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Waking

The fact that the sun has once again with sharp claws
Pried
Open the eye of the day
Does not establish
The necessity
Or recurrence
Of any of the terms

Like light or day and
Night we awaken
Knowing
That where we've been has led us only
To the edge
Of this field

And at our backs
Memories
Stolid as boulders cracked
By long-forgotten frozen rains
Do not advance
Toward the grackles
Whose strident plaint proclaims
Dominion
Of the dew

Over the Rim

Of this day hovers
The just design
This day tried
But failed to find,
All its busy creatures

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Spurting with desires,
Spieling the recipes
Of their self-justifications
By which the mind
Of the entire world

This day betrayed
The pefection of our common
Lot, our clearest thought
Into these fragments, these
Wounds, self-serving anthems

And ridiculous longings—among them
You and I were for a moment
Together welded in a semblance
Of what this broken
Day left unattained.

A New Notebook

These are the empty
pages awaiting
the imperative scrawl
that will incise
their surfaces with images
the soul has seized
out of confusion as the moon
holds in its unfaltering
light the true
tenants of the night,
redeemed from dark and changed
from customary sight
as though by love's altering
all the doubting sense
perceived to what like love's
imperial behests
cannot be disbelieved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DANIEL CURLEY

Where You Wouldn't Want To Walk

"IF YOU DRIVE WHERE you wouldn't want to walk," the ad said. I don't remember what it was that I was supposed to run right out and buy. Perhaps spark plugs. Perhaps snow tires—no, probably not snow tires. The picture showed a car stopped on a narrow road in the woods, not bogged down, just stopped. The hood was raised in the classic gesture of despair, and I imagined—as was intended—some logging road deep in Marlboro country, some trail between the trading post and the hunting cabin. And then I looked again.

Where I wouldn't want to walk? It was my favorite walk in all the world. I read once about a bum who was saving his money so that when he felt the end coming on, he could go into a whorehouse and die in bed with a woman as, he said, a man ought. That's the way I feel about that walk. If you really could tell when death was coming and then set out as you ought, like an elephant, why, then, when I felt I could stand, good or bad, just one more thing, I'd set out on that walk and keep going until my heart broke with joy.

And it might happen at any step. There was scarcely a tree or a rock that didn't recall something to crack any heart. There was no lumber camp or hunting cabin around that bend at the back of the picture. And there was no trading post just behind the camera. No, around that bend, there was a big fir tree riddled from top to bottom with long rectangular holes, dim and weathered now around the edges, but bright and startling the day I watched the pileated woodpecker making them and littering the ground with shreds of fresh wood. I carried one of those shreds for a long time in my pocket. After all, I'd been looking for him for years so that coming upon him was like a vision of the grail, and the tree became forever a shrine.

Behind the camera, there was a break in the trees where you could see the marsh. I guess they didn't think the marsh was Marlboro enough, but it was where I saw the little blue heron, which makes it about the best country there is.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anyone who knows anything about birds will know that it takes a good-sized tract to hold a pileated woodpecker and that a little blue isn't to be come across just anywhere. So was it really Marlboro country? No, it really wasn't. It was an Adirondack preserve that came right up to the edge of town, and what was really behind the camera was just about the best cooking you will find anywhere, clean quiet rooms, and half a dozen guests who came back every year or undertook to find guaranteed replacements—guaranteed simpatico replacements, people who wanted to read a little and take walks by themselves. Sometimes they worked—by themselves, quietly—at least their typewriters sounded like work. But they were the kind of people who used pads and towels to muffle the sound and who always asked if it bothered you and who always replied that it didn't and who never said what it was they were typing. I sometimes thought they were writers, and I sometimes thought they were blackmailers, but since I had been guaranteed, of course I never asked.

One, at least, was a poet. I found that out later but I suspected it at the time. She had a typewriter but she didn't type much, and she didn't type as if she had ever had to learn to get through pages and pages in a hurry. Slow and deliberate. And I used to visualize each letter black and distinct and solitary on the page. She also walked a great deal, and she carried bird glasses. We walked at about the same time each day, so it would have been easy for us to go together, but I couldn't force myself on her—I had been guaranteed not to. We kept our distance.

Then, one day, as I stood by the marsh, hoping for another epiphany, I saw something glint among the trees on the hill opposite. I searched slowly. Another glint. Lost. Caught. Eye to eye, our binoculars locked for a moment. Then I continued my sweep.

I was being watched. What kind of a bird was I, anyway? Was she spying for my wife, who was practically guaranteed not to be that kind of person, although really you never can be quite sure about wives? Was—ah, well that is all nonsense, cops and robbers, doctors and nurses, la vie de Bohème. Still, my eyes had met her flaming eyes, locked flaming, left flaming, something between us.

I began stalking her. It wasn't easy. She would set out in the afternoon and I would follow her. She didn't walk fast but I could never overtake her. She would simply disappear. Then I began to take an extra walk in the morning just to study the trail itself. I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

found all the spots where you could look back over the trail—across the marsh, for instance—and see if anyone was coming. I even found the place she had been watching from that day, and I felt a strange shudder because I hadn't realized how close the trail bent back to that side of the marsh. She could have been sitting there quietly as I passed almost at arm's length. One by one, I found her hiding places and watched her watching me. I triumphed over the spy. And then it came to me that she was the one who set out first each day and that she wasn't spying at all but was avoiding me.

I know now that she was very shy and so passionately devoted to her own privacy that she automatically faded from the face of the earth rather than invade another's landscape. I doubt very much that she ever allowed herself to look at me once she had gone into hiding, so that probably she wasn't looking at me at all the day I thought our glasses locked us to each other. Not that that makes any difference: I thought we were locked, I felt we were locked, and that's what counts and what explains the rest of it.

There were ducks on the marsh that day, the kind you never can be sure about, no gorgeous males to set you right at once. I pretended to study them but really I was trying to locate her among the undergrowth. I found her and went on taking out my Peterson and studying the plates. I can do that endlessly, and the great part is that I immediately forget everything I read, and it is all fresh and exciting day after day. Actually, I guess I was doing more than pretend to study the plates, but I told myself I was deceiving her. Anyway you look at it, it seems pretty harmless. I moved on. glasses at the ready, bothered by dim thrushes among the undergrowth.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for her to come out of that hiding place and be far away before I could get around to where she was, but I was convinced that her object was to lie in wait and get behind me. At that time, I still believed in the spy theory. Fortunately, the trail near her hiding place commanded the first view of a towering poplar with a dead top branch where more than once I had seen a hawk and once, when the light was fading, an enormous owl, which took a squirrel just beside the trail, a spot I still can't pass with quiet heart.

It was natural, then, that I should stop and study the tree at an angle kind to my neck. On my walks and in my room I had worked over dialogues for us to speak at some improbable con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frontation, but I was surprised to hear myself say as I focused my glasses on the topmost limb, "Are you all right? Are you hurt?"

I hadn't seen her at all, but she stood up at once and said, "I'm just making some notes." And she had a pencil and note pad to show it.

"Inspiration?" I said, following my theory that she was a poet.

Perhaps she was so used to knowing she was a poet that it didn't strike her as odd that I should assume it. "Walking makes the rhythm come," she said and stepped out onto the trail with me.

We had broken in upon each other, so we continued our walk together. She told me she was sure the ducks were black ducks. She told me she had seen the heron several times but never the woodpecker. She envied me that, she said. She was very serious about birds and remembered everything she ever read about them. Her Peterson was fresh and clean and protected by a neat waterproof cover, and I doubt if she ever needed to refer to it. I found it rather intimidating. Mine is dirty and falling apart from my daily struggles through the same few pages, but she held it for a moment and considered it as if it were an object quite beyond price. She told me about Wordsworth's theory of the rhythm of walking and poetic rhythm and recited some of his lines as we walked. I never heard a line of her own.

I told her about my pilgrim's trail and all its shrines, about the tree chopped full of holes, about the place the squirrel died, silently, swiftly, before he knew he was in danger, the terrible shadow, and especially I told her of another place. "Here," I said, "under this drift of leaves. A year ago." I stirred the leaves with my foot, and they rustled sharply as they had that day. "It was autumn."

It wasn't the kind of thing easily explained. So much depended on what I had brought to bear, on the frame that set the scale for the action. For one thing, I was just out of the hospital. They had opened me up and pawed around, taking out this and leaving that, the soothsayers, and deciding in the end that I'd do very well provided I didn't die at once. I myself was much of the same opinion, although I was rather less optimistic and under the circumstances a good deal less interested. In fact, I was so uninterested that they thought it would do no harm if they gave me a roommate over night, someone who would be dead by morning. He was a large man, very fat, and had been told, no doubt, again and again

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that he would have to lose weight and would have to stop drinking. He was blue and unconscious and was breathing like an engine. Ah. Ah. Ah. I must have shown some irritation, because they gave me a shot and told me to drop off.

Gladly, gladly would I have dropped off. It was no pleasure to listen to that breathing getting louder and louder and to see his wife standing at the foot of his bed hour after hour. I was far too close to it myself to enjoy it all as spectacle. Ah. Ah. Ah. Silence. The doctor and the nurse balanced the books. The wife turned and walked out of the room. Click. Click. Click. She was stupendous. Click. Click. Click. Measured and precise steps without the least faltering. Maybe that's why he drank and went on drinking. Why he ate and went on eating. Click. Click. Thud. They carried her away and almost at once they carried him away, too, in a wicker basket. It was not encouraging.

So I walked out slowly in the afternoon, stopping to sit down, leaning on my cane, still feeling as if at any moment my fortune might come tumbling out over my lap for all the world to read. I didn't go far, you can imagine, but right here, barely into the woods, I planted myself—what goes on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?—and rested. Suddenly there was a tumult in the leaves at my feet. I was still too unused to my arms and legs for them to run away unless I stopped and told them exactly what they were supposed to do. Even then they wouldn't always do what I wanted. Like my god damned bowels. Imagine sitting down to reason with your bowels. It's an outrage.

There I was, picturing a rattlesnake at my very feet and faced with mutiny all over the place. Who can reason at a time like that? So I didn't run away and I didn't slash and smash with my cane. I could only stand and watch the revelation of something far worse than a rattlesnake.

A soldier spends his life drilling so he won't have to think when the chips are down. By the time a man becomes a sea captain, he knows what to say under any conceivable circumstances. Stave in his bottom. Out pops the right command. Chop off his masts. Stop his engines in a hurricane. Does he have to reason with his ship? He doesn't even have to tell his mouth to open itself so the computer can spit out the right message. Stimulus response stimulus response stimulus response. What rational being could ever imagine that he ought to spend his days drilling his arms and legs?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hup, two, hup, two. Biceps, pick it up. Hup, two, hup, two. Triceps, god damn it, look alive. Bowels, ATTENTION. You Bones, in here, what the fuck do you think you're in there for?

The leaves exploded into fury at my feet, two beasts locked in combat, the passion of monsters, each the size of my thumb. One got purchase for his back against the edge of my sole and rolled the other over. The earth trembled. The rocks screamed in agony. The horizon rocked and threatened to slip down over my ears.

"You must understand that it was over in an instant, all in the most absolute silence."

I would have sworn that I was listening to a battle sound-track—but, of course, that was only my blood roaring in my ears—so that when one broke away and began to run, silence became suddenly oppressive. "He's making it," I said aloud. "He's going to be all right." There was no pursuit. The victor knew what losers never know and turned his back even before the other dropped in midstride. Charitably, my arms and legs and back and guts all got together and bent me down for a good close look.

"A hind leg twitching, two drops of blood on a leaf."

As far as the eye could see, great gouts of blood among the evergreens, here, there, draining down into the marsh, which was reddening from moment to moment. Half the sky was smeared, the firmament streaming with mole's blood and the endless scream of silence.

"The next day there wasn't a trace. There are those whose job it is to clean up. Even the blood was gone. As if nothing had happened. Not a trace."

My god, my god, who drinks up all the blood?

I had told her the best thing I knew—best? Most true, most moving, most terrible. And I had told it the best way I could, but I knew I had left out everything that made it best. I had only told what happened. As I heard myself saying it to her, I realized it could only be a story to someone else, an anecdote, the words wholly devoid of magic power. But whether she understood the story or whether she only understood the idea of magic, she took me by the hand and drew me into the woods to show me what was magic for her.

It wasn't far at all, quite within sight of my hawk-lookout tree, although I had never known it existed. There was a rock face in the hillside and a trickle of water from the rock, collecting in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

natural basin about waist high. She looked at me and smiled and cupped her hands, dipped them and lifted them sparkling, and drank. She didn't have to tell me that this was the best thing she knew. Then she stepped aside so that I could drink. I cupped my hands and bent forward, believing completely that her best without any words could become my best, although my best had so failed in the telling. I reached and bent, but before my hands could touch the water, I dropped to the ground in agony.

"My back," I whispered, "my back."

She said she knew. And she must have, because she helped me flatten out on the ground, and she rolled up her sweater and put it under the small of my back, which is exactly what they did later in the hospital—not a sweater, of course, but a towel. And she bathed my forehead. And she went for help.

All I could think of as I lay there—because I could think if I was absolutely still and didn't move so much as a toe—all I could think of was how it would look to me if a girl came out of the woods and reported that a middle-aged man was lying in some secret place with a hurt back. It seemed to me that the least embarrassing thing for all of us would be for me to faint, so when I heard them coming with the stretcher, I rotated my ankle and passed out at once.

I was right enough in my fears. The doctors and nurses laughed at me in the hospital and made jokes about love. But what really broke them up was when I explained exactly how it had happened. I cupped my hands and held them out—very cautiously—and the hospital rocked with laughter. The gesture was so classic in back cases that until I left they would point me out to their friends, cup their hands, and have a good laugh all around.

I never saw her again. Her vacation in the woods was the last before she entered a convent. When I could walk, I went back for another look. There was the spot in the leaves that only I knew about and never could tell. The leaves were all green. The marsh glittered in the sun. The sky was flawless blue. I watched the spring in the rock and listened to the tiny drip. But I didn't dare put out a hand to it. I thought of kneeling so I wouldn't have to bend my back, but that was a phantasy like a posture in an erotic dream—I'd have had to kneel in mid-air and have a neck like a swan. There was her best, so close, untasted, although I could practically feel the shock of the cold. My teeth ached. My god, my god, what has become of us?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JYOTIRMOY DATTA

Letter from America

I have been amazed
by much that I saw in America
but I was not least disturbed
by the sight of their elaborate
corkscrew openers
with flappable wings

it looks like the skeleton
of a dwarf without legs
but its spinal-chord ends up by becoming its phallus
which twists its way into the soft
but dry flesh of the cork
pressure on the outspread arms
brings about its spastic ejection
cork and all
which could be why in local slang
making love is also called screwing

but it is a cold lust
like the impotent emperors
of the Arabian Nights
it demands a virgin bottle every time
it is never through without puncturing
the maidenhead of the bottle

I think of all the empty places in the world
the inside of the glove I lost last winter
the loneliness in the breast
of the dry mussel-shell
but there is no cavity emptier
than the tunnel dug in the cork
by the passionless screw
into which it will never return

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the Image of the Gods

> If oxen and horses or lions had hands, and could paint with their hands, and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and make their bodies in image of their several kinds.
> —Xenophanes

I try to think of a creature
which shares as many of the attributes
of the gods as the jellyfish
round or star-shaped
the jellyfish has no front or rear
it has no left side or right
and although it has a dense body
it is almost invisible
it barely casts a shadow

no other creature of land or air
surely not man
nor even the most talented horse
can give us as much insight
into the physical attributes of the gods
save perhaps the spider

true the spider's belly is in perpetual sweat
but it is a clean excrement
which the spider uses as silk for its web

our space is limited by notions
of what lies ahead
or darkly behind
we have flanks and rear
exposed to surprise attacks
but to the spider with its four pairs of eyes
all sides are front
and with its four pairs of legs
it can walk forward or diagonally
sideways or back
without ever having to turn its body

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something which even the caterpillar can't do
despite its numerous legs
most importantly
although it has an opaque body
it has almost no weight
which is why
without wetting its furry ankles
it can run on water like a god

Journey into Space

even before it had time
to be surprised at the innocent worm
having such an electric sting
the fish was hurtled into orbit
in an alien element
where there was hardly any atmosphere

its gills expanded to the uttermost
but it is hard to trap air with combs
the oxygen-starved brain saw
wild forms
but mercifully
as the metal crab's claw
was withdrawn with a jerk
and a part of its tongue
consciousness left
and the muscles stopped twitching

the only mark of bewilderment
was left in its lidless
stark eyes whose vision
is not marred by such trappings as eyelashes
the balls very nearly burst
out of the sockets
but even this sign grew blurred
as gradually the eyes frosted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WENDELL BERRY

Song in a Year of Catastrophe

I began to be followed by a voice saying:
"It can't last. It can't last.
Harden yourself. Harden yourself.
Be ready. Be ready."

"Go look under the leaves,"
it said, "for what is living there
is long dead in your tongue."
And it said, "Put your hands
into the earth. Live close
to the ground. Learn the darkness.
Gather round you all
the things that you love, name
their names, prepare
to lose them. It will be
as if all you know were turned
around within your body."

I went and put my hands
into the ground, and they took root
and grew into a season's harvest.
I looked behind the veil
of the leaves, and heard voices
that I knew had been dead
in my tongue years before my birth.
I learned the dark.

And still the voice stayed with me.
Waking in the early mornings,
I could hear it, like a bird
bemused among the leaves,
a mockingbird idly singing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the autumn of catastrophe:
"Be ready. Be ready.
Harden yourself. Harden yourself."

And I heard the sound
of a great engine pounding
in the air, and a voice asking:
"Change or slavery ?
Hardship or slavery?"
and voices answering:
"Slavery! Slavery!"
And I was afraid, loving
what I knew would be lost.

Then the voice following me said:
"You have not yet come close enough.
Come nearer the ground. Learn
from the woodcock in the woods
whose feathering is a ritual
of the fallen leaves,
and from the nesting quail
whose speckling makes her hard to see
in the long grass.
Study the coat of the mole.
For the farmer shall wear
the greenery and the furrows
of his fields, and bear
the long standing of the woods."

And I asked: "You mean a death, then?"
"Yes," the voice said. "Die
into what the earth requires of you."
Then I let go all holds, and sank
like a hopeless swimmer into the earth,
and at last came fully into the ease
and the joy of that place,
all my lost ones returning.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Current

Having once put his hand into the ground,
seeding there what he hopes will outlast him,
a man has made a marriage with his place,
and if he leaves it his flesh will ache to go back.
His hand has given up its birdlife in the air.
It has reached into the dark like a root
and begun to wake, quick and mortal, in timelessness.
a flickering sap coursing upward into his head
so that he sees the old tribespeople bend
in the sun, digging with sticks, the forest opening
to receive their hills of corn, squash and beans,
their lodges and graves, and closing again.
He is made their descendent, what they left
in the earth rising into him like a seasonal juice.
And he sees the bearers of his own blood arriving,
the forest burrowing into the earth as they come,
their hands gathering the stones up into walls,
and relaxing, the stones crawling back into the ground
to lie still under the black wheels of machines.
The current flowing to him through the earth
flows past him, and he sees one descended from him,
a young man who has reached into the ground,
his hand held in the dark as by a hand.

A Standing Ground

Flee fro the prees, and dwelle with sothfastnesse;
Suffyce unto thy thyng, though hit be smal . . .

However just and anxious I have been,
I will stop and step back
from the crowd of those who may agree
with what I say, and be apart.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is no earthly promise of life or peace
but where the roots branch and weave
their patient silent passages in the dark;
uprooted, I have been furious without an aim.
I am not bound for any public place,
but for ground of my own
where I have planted vines and orchard trees,
and in the heat of the day climbed up
into the healing shadow of the woods.
Better than any argument is to rise at dawn
and pick dew-wet red berries in a cup.

The Slopes of Waban[1]

There is a place on Waban
south of White Mountain
where wind-tilted cedars make coves
where the wild sheep winter
in the snow. He had attempted
a crossing by the nearest path,
beginning the ascent at noon.
It grew cold, the snow
came on thick and blinding
and wiped out the trail.
Knee-deep in sodden snow,
he walked on. It may have been
the creature instinct that led him
to the cedar shelter. He found it
about four hours after dark,
and heard the heavy breathing
of the flock. If he thought
at all he must have thought them

[1] Taken, with several excisions and punctuation changes, from *The Land of Little Rain by* Mary Austin, by kind permission of the publisher, Houghton Mifflin Co.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a belated shepherd and his sheep.
He took no note but of the warmth
of packed fleeces, and snuggled in,
dead with sleep. That was all
until morning woke him
shining on a white world. Then
the very soul of him shook
to see the wild sheep of God
stand up about him, nodding
their great horns beneath the cedar roof.
The cloud drift scattered and broke
billowing in the cañons.
The leader stamped lightly
to put the flock in motion.
They took the drifts
in long leaps that are nearest
to flight, down and away
on the slopes of Waban.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RAYMOND DURGNAT

Symbolism and the Underground

THE PSYCHEDELIC ARTS associated with the hippie movement show many parallels with Symbolism. The stress on inner experience; on the systematic derangement of the senses by drugs; the inevitable intersections between doctrines of mixed media and Symbolist notions of "correspondences" between the senses; the concern with fantasy as mental landscape; the interest in artificial environments (stroboscopes and incense, as against exquisite objects and perfumes); the eclectic preoccupation with heretical mysticisms, occultism and fringe sciences (UFO vs. alchemy); the feeling for aesthetic experience as passage to another plane—all link the two movements.

A whole stratum of similarities is telegraphically summarised by one line from the Four Seasons' "Watch The Flowers Grow": "Listen to my thoughts and take a ride." What matters here is the paradoxically rapid movement from sound ("listen") through telepathy ("thoughts") to journeying through a spiritual landscape ("take a ride"). This sense of precious, yet bewildering, interiority implies a suddenly increased awareness of self-consciousness, a result, no doubt, of cultural pressures (and frustrations). The Symbolists, on the defensive against a thriving bourgeois philistinism, can be seen as a last wave of Romantics, forced to retreat from politics (by 1848), and from nature (by the city and by Darwin), into a last redoubt—the irrational areas of mind. Mallarmé and Valéry hover round the theme of mirrors and Narcissus. "I watch myself watching myself watching. . . ." "*Je est un autre.*" The mirror has long been a popular image for introversion.[1] Its extension into the sphere of interpersonal relationships is beautifully achieved in the lyrics sung in Nico's cold, bland, husky voice, tough yet curiously suspended, on *The Velvet Underground* LP:

[1] As I try to show in more detail in *Films and Feelings* (M.I.T.), in a chapter entitled "The Mute Poetry of the Commercial Cinema."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'll be your mirror, reflect what you are,
In case you don't know, I'll be the wind the rain
And the sunset; lighten your door, show that you're here;
When you think that the night has seen in your mind,
Let me stand to show you that you're blind,
Please put out your hands, because I see you.
I find it hard to believe you don't know the beauty
But if you don't let me be your eyes,
A hand to your darkness, so you won't be afraid. . . .

A nice sense of spatial dislocation survives the too-easy punning of the Procol Harum's "Homburg":

The mirror on reflection has climbed back upon the wall,
For the floor she found descended and the ceiling was too tall.

It's not at all insignificant that several completely conventional, and banal, pop-lyrics should now begin with a kind of Symbolist prologue, expressing a kind of descent into oneself. Thus, the Supremes:

Through the mirror of my mind
Time after time
I see reflections of you and me
Reflections of
The way life used to be,

while Reparata and the Del-Rons resume another type of Symbolist imagery:

This is the Captain of your ship,
Your heart, calling. . . .

Themes of sexual passivity recur in both Symbolism and the modern underground, albeit in different modes. Gone is the Christian-Manichean sense of guilt and its concomitant, the *nostalgie de la boue;* gone also is the aristocratic tone, the salon-styled spiritual glamour. There is less celebration of, and guilt about, male sensitivity, or female forcefulness. If the boys wear long hair

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the girls the boys' clothes, no particular issue is made of the "Monsieur Vénus" aspect. Today's quasi-androgyne seems, indeed, to have cut loose from any sense of homosexuality, and, perhaps, from that exaggeration of the characteristics of one's own sex which can be considered a traditional defence against the undifferentiated aspects of our nature. The superficial resemblance to homosexuality may not be altogether misleading, but explicable in another way. In our less hierarchical, more devious world, father- and mother-figures are less imposing, less clearcut, and, genuinely, more difficult to become. The development of feeling often becomes lateral—that is, one develops one's affinities with the other sex, in a friendly rather than a perverse way—rather than vertical, that is, maturing from a son- to a father-type, or from a daughter- to a mother-type. By the same process, the war of the sexes diminishes in intensity as the war of the generations sharpens, as boy-men, instead of forcing girl-women into a very passive position, become paranoid vis-à-vis a vast, conglomerate, inhuman "they.'

The underground's romanticisation of sexual aberration revives that Symbolist penchant for diffuse, sustained, atmospheric states —a long tumescence, scarcely craving, indeed postponing, orgastic release. Such movies as Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* and *Scorpio Rising* and Andy Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* vibrate on this wavelength, the former with a Byzantine colour-splendour (mauve motorbike saddles), the latter with a highly critical realism. So does Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, whose transvestites pose like 1900 film-stars before vapid backcloths, or handle one another's semi-limp genitals with an obsessive lethargy of tempo. Underground sexology also stresses the possibilities of non-orgastic, wholebody sexuality (the cult of polymorphous perversity, karezza techniques, etc.). The same diffuse eroticism underlines many pop-lyrics, notably The Velvet Underground's fullbloodedly masochistic "Venus In Fur":

> Downy sins of sheeplike fancies
> Chase the costumes she shall wear;
> Ermine furs adorn imperious. . . .
> Shiny shiny shiny boots of leather,
> Whiplash girl-child, in the dark. . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am tired, I am weary,
I could sleep for thousand years,
A thousand dreams that would awake me,
Different colours make up tears. . . .

The model for this rhythmless, indefinite state seems to be not so much the erotic daydream (which inclines to the crescendo) as the drug experience: sex becomes a long-lasting, activity-less, time-disrupting "high," a plateau without peak or fall.

The underground's advocacy of drugs has been extensively publicized, and one has perhaps to stress that it can also be seen as a minor nineteenth-century literary tradition now reappearing in the popular arena. Opium was massively used in Victorian medicine, as a pain-killer, and one can establish a "drug-tradition" embracing Coleridge, de Quincey, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Cocteau, Michaux, and Aldous Huxley. Whether the Beatles' "*L*ucy in the *S*ky With *D*iamonds" is or is not wordplay on L.S.D., the song's lyrics certainly celebrate a hallucinatory vision which bears comparison with Coleridge's Xanadu, with its pleasure dome (a diamond-sky), its river, its damsels and dulcimers (sitars!). In their "White Rabbit," the Jefferson Airplane brilliantly "kidnap" the imagery of *Alice In Wonderland,* converting its dream-language into drug distortions of the body-image: "One pill makes you larger and the other makes you small. . . ." Subsequently, hookahs become opium-habits, mushrooms become mescalin, and so on. Which doesn't prove that Lewis Carroll was a junkie, only that drugs and dreams are twin tracks to wonderland.

Behind these perversions and dilatations of libidinal drive looms the deathwish: at its best in the more heroic, positive form apostrophised by Baudelaire:

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre,
Ce pays nous ennuie, O Mort! Appareillons. . . .
Plonger au fond du gouffre, enfer ou ciel, qu'importe!
Au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver du nouveau.

Such impatience is an obvious motive for drug-experience; maybe our drugs, as instruments of death and rebirth, portend, imperfect and dangerous as they are, the dawn of a new, materialistic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

religion; each man his own dying God. Nor is it absurd to see a connection between this attack on our routine-contaminated minds and the underground cult of "mindlessness." This range of attitudes may evoke Baudelaire's notion that stupidity in women was sublime, as a condition of their beauty, isolating it as a real power. This in its turn isn't so far from Warhol's serial broodings on Marilyn and on pop icons, which, being icons, don't think but are, and, since they don't think, are as dead as machines. Baudelaire's notion of the statuesque as a powerful, cruel, liberating mindlessness, isn't so far from Warhol's ironic—but not altogether ironic—"I'd like to be a machine." Again, the life-in-death which, like drugs, is an antithetical poison to the constructions of responsible, respectable thought.

Another liberation-prison is the cult of the dandy. Symbolism, being aristocratic, vaunted the dandy's cold control; today's underground prefers to think of dandyism as a spontaneous acting-out of a fantasy (it's not difficult to see how the two notions coalesce at root). For the Symbolists, the dandy was a poet in his behaviour; a kind of one-man happening (not shielded, as happenings are, from the world around). Gérard de Nerval used to walk around the Tuileries with a lobster on a pale blue lead. Baudelaire sported velvet clothes and dyed his hair green. Various subspecies of Bohemian flora and fauna were nicknamed the Hydropaths (because they never washed) and the Hirsutes (for their long hair). These divergences from the stiff, dark, status-ridden garb of the epoch are matched in our era of crewcuts and grey flannel suits. Hirsutes and Hydropaths are matched by the anti-dandyism of the beatniks. Baudelaire dyed his hair green; Warhol dyes his silver. Instead of the ironically aristocratic insolence of the Symbolist dandy, kaftans, bells and beads express a nostalgia for an Indian timelessness and myth. Flowing robes and colourful regalia assert pleasure as a social allegiance and a spiritual quest. This non-utilitarianism ranges through all degrees of frivolity, but includes a profoundly Baudelairean notion of "stupidity" and the conscious use of clothes as artistic media (to cue one's own and others' fantasies), and as a para-body and therefore a liberating takeover bid for the wearer's mind.

The spiritualisation of clothes finds a natural, or, rather, logical, extension in the use of elaborated make-up (Symbolist theme of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the mask, of Yeatsian *persona*), of body paint and coloured slides projected over dancers. A passage from William Burroughs' *Nova Express* nicely suggests the ego-dissolution, the materialisation of fantasy, which is sought:

> Street of the Light Dancers who dance with color writing projected on their bodies in spotlight layers peel off red yellow blue in dazzling strip acts, translucent tentative beings flashing through neon hula hoops—stand naked and explode in white fade out in grey—vaporize in blue twilight—. . . and nobody knew whether he was in a Western movie in Hong Kong or the Aztec Empire in Ancient Rome or suburban America, whether he was a bandit a commuter or a chariot driver whether he was firing a "real" gun or watching a gangster movie and the city moved in swirls and eddies and tornadoes of image explosive bio-advance out of space to men. . . .

The imagery gives an impression of hectic eclecticism, rather than of Symbolism's static exclusiveness, its limited range of careful nostalgias. But this is only to be expected in this era of the universal *musée imaginaire,* a museum, which is commensurate with the mass media, and which encapsulates our daily thoughts and lives, so intensively that everyday fashions swing back, with conscious nostalgia, to the era of Bonnie and Clyde, or proclaim the space-age ahead of time. To revive one particular era is no longer enough; rival eras are too clamorous in claims and counter-claims, as is the inner voice of scepticism; no, one must achieve a "lap-dissolve" of eras, a merger of eras which is fantasy per se, in a dream-flux. . . .

Paralleling the absence of Manicheanism, a revived interest in the transcendental and the occult is conspicuously indifferent to the Christian tradition. As Symbolism makes aesthetics a metaphysic of intraphysical events, a realm of experience which, being subjectively real, can be asserted as a plane of existence, as somehow more real than the real world, so it achieves its affinity with mysticism. Symbolism turned to Swedenborg, to myth, to occultism, to notions of correspondences, as validations of this inner-other realm. The underground derives its mysticisms from different sources, but mystical it, too, certainly is. The usual good-evil polarity hasn't too much meaning here, since the underground thinks in (probably sentimental) terms of oneness with the cosmos as the antidote to being uptight and nasty, and concentrates

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on tolerance, kindness and "doing your own thing." Both energy and apathy are prized, in contrast to conformist rhythms; it is arguable that the underground's besetting sin is despair disguised as detachment, and masochistic apathy disguised as being "cool." But the network of apathy and energy in the underground is not to be easily summarised; it seems to attract both obsessive activists and layabouts, who surprisingly often turn out to be the same people in different aspects. And a similar analysis, applied to respectable "suburban" existence, might show that apathy looks like energy when it's disguised as respectability, that much activity is merely following the path of least resistance, and so on. That the denizens of the underground fail to live their life adequately, both by the overground's standards and by their own, they themselves would be the last to deny—which is no extenuation.

The Zen Buddhist influence is not, of course, exclusive to the underground, and though it draws on its vocabulary, the creed is too ascetic, too Apollonian, to be congenial to the underground's hedonistic, sensual, and Dionysian tonus. From this point of view, the most congenial of the major religions are probably Hinduism, for its physicality, and Taoism, for its sense of impermanence, of self-abandonment to the stream of fate, of reverent nescience, of positive nihilism. In a curious way, the underground attains a kind of post-Heisenberg equivalent of animism, pantheism, or the various creeds which put man on the same level as the animal and the inorganic. Wilhelm Reich's orgone theory is an interesting exploration of the ways in which physical energy becomes life-force; life-force, instinct; and instinct, mind. These linkages must exist, but they defy orthodox scientific terminology. The underground tendency is to stress not, as one might, the conflicts between the human organism and surrounding energy-fields, but—sentimentally?—their harmony. Though the common denominator between the organic and the inorganic is energy rather than, as in animism, mind, the end result, a kind of identification, is not dissimilar. In fact, in this materialistic age it's the only kind of identification which is possible, since the notion of mind has itself undergone analytical decomposition into sets of inclinations and impulses.

This sense of human character is to be found in many contemporary novelists, and Nathalie Sarraute and William Burroughs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

afford two usefully contrasting instances. The former's sense of human nature as a matter of "tropisms" (tropisms being the impulses which inspire plants, e.g., to grow towards sunlight), is too derisive, and too linked to conformist pettinesses, to interest the underground. Burroughs' science-fiction cosmology, of insect-people, of vegetable people, of virus people, breeding and feeding on human hosts, may well paraphrase a link between unconscious fantasy and psycho-physiological processes, which drugs have brought to consciousness, or paralleled in consciousness via their chemical-mental effects, experienced with a blend of revulsion and fascination. It may be that visceral awareness is a nightmarishly regressive version of the narcissism implicit in dandy clothes and body-paint; but there seems every reason why this level of human experience should be due for exploration. From this viewpoint, Burroughs can be seen as an introverted, regressive, "negative" converse to the stress on life-force in Whitman and Henry Miller. One can even see "psychedelphia," with or without drugs, as the attempt to experience levels of being whose existence is signalled to us by materialism's insistence that the mind must be rooted in the body—as against the behaviourist denial that such a thing as the mind can reasonably be supposed to exist. It is also, of course, possible that the underground is simply using the existence of levels which can't be experienced as an excuse for indulging its regressions. At its best, though, the conviction that *"je est un autre,"* that individuality in vanity, that the social personality is a Procrustean bed for the tide-and-wind-like movement of the real mind, that one's consciousness must be as fully aware as possible of wherever it is (chemically, in one's body), before it can reach out to grasp the cosmos, or others, abstractly, that one's real plane of being is continuous with "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower," can have a real spiritual value. Something of this has penetrated even to non-underground pop lyrics, as when Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich sing exultantly: "I can hear the grass grow . . ."

Ironically, therefore, the de-anthropomorphisation of the mind's interior results in an affinity with the "sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused," which can be felt, not only through the prism of nature, or through one's moral nature, but also through the body-mind itself, through music, through certain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

environments. . . . In other words, the link is overt between the Romantic sense of nature, and the Symbolist idolatry of sensation and artifice. The feeling that one has several layers of being, the lowest of which merge with cosmic currents and are also the spiritually highest, underlies the mental structure of many pop-lyrics. It would be futile to criticise, on grounds of mixed metaphor, such a phrase as The Incredible String Band's "The freckles of the rain are telling me," or to pillory the lumbering metaphorical structure of:

> When the morning of your eyes
> Comes peeping through my shadows.

In both cases the musical context binds the two concepts more closely than words alone may suggest, and the effect is of a superposition, a mingling, of two concepts, rather than an explanation of one by the other. Since underground culture ignores the "Aristotelian" logic derived from bestowing spiritual primacy on verbal definitions (a procedure which is not so much scientific as theological), it responds to connotation more than denotation, and the same structures for avoiding "illogicalities" of denotation aren't needed.

An intriguing theory, neatly unifying several streams of underground mysticism, in the regions where it spills over into occultism, is winningly advanced in John Mitchell's *The Flying Saucer Vision,* which links UFOs with Stonehenge and fairy lore, and in an untitled comic strip by Martin Sharp in *Oz 12,* a strip whose storyline, to the effect that Christ was "planted" by a race of benevolent extraterrestrials who came on "yonder star" is offered, not at all satirically, but ambiguously, as a bitter whimsy or as a possibility, whichever you please. E.S.P., flying saucerology, orgone theory and astrology can all be related to a magnetic field theory of the universe, and to the statistical fact that suicides, road accidents, sex crimes and other indices of mental turmoil do reach peaks during the full moon. The blend of "etherealism" and materialism is reminiscent of Huysmans' long discussions of whether the consecrated Hosts of nineteenth-century Paris were rendered spiritually void by the adulteration of the physical ingredients used. A similarly "spiritual chemico-physiology" underlies the underground cult of macrobiotic food.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The objections to such eclectic occultism as a way of thought, or of life, are obvious enough, and nicely summarised by the Alan Price Set in their "The House That Jack Built":

> Brother Nigel paints the stairs with the signs of the Zodiac,
> Throws paint in the mirror as he stands in his plastic mac,
> Sister Emma races ever round and round the garden,
> Spends the whole day saying, "I beg your pardon" . . .
> This is the house that Jack built, baby,
> And it reaches up to the sky.

On the other hand, The Nirvana praise the disorder of "Pentecost Hotel":

> And in the lobby Magdalena is friendly
> To all the people with a passport of insanity.

And the Beatles produce a beautiful justification of transcendentalism:

> Turn off your mind; relaxing, it is not dying;
> Lay down your thoughts. Surrender to the voice . . .
> Listen to the colour of your dreams; it is not leaving.
> Play the game of existence to the end—of the beginning.

A "grand theory" unifying the various streams of underground mysticism and sensibility would seem to lie fairly close, and would obviously run parallel to the "esoteric doctrine" on whose brink many of the Symbolists felt themselves to be trembling (currently orgone theory seems to be taking the place of alchemy). Astrology, after all, can be stated in terms of "correspondences"—between a planet, a stone, a colour, a month, an organ of the body, and so on. Bertrand Russell has expressed his surprise at the extent to which internal mental events seem to parallel or correspond to the structure of the external world; and though, so far as rationalism is concerned, any theory of "correspondences" must remain one of the ghosts thronging the machine, one can justify the underground's eclectic occultism in two ways. First, philosophical theory can still have a mythological function, that is, be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

used poetically, impressionistically, as it were. Its responsiveness to the human being as a whole, a responsiveness of which irrationality is a precondition, could conceivably be developed in a way adumbrated by Freud and developed by Symbolism's heir, André Breton. That is, theories of correspondence and coincidence might well allow the unconscious to express itself more satisfyingly than rationalism allows. Thus a rewarding life would be, not a safe and utilitarian one, but one leading through a rich road of self-abandonment. Herman Kahn, among others, has suggested that in our increasingly restrictive society many people will find it necessary to "drop out" for a year or two, and this might often involve an unconscious-directed mode of life. R. D. Laing has argued that a temporary condition of insanity may represent a deepening of self-knowledge against a conventionality miscalled sanity.

Although this survey has stressed similarities rather than differences (which are self-evident), one contrast in particular is worth a closer glance. The Symbolists, high or low, sprang from, and could appeal to, a semi-idle upper middle class. Though their contacts with a disreputable demi-monde and bas-monde, were not a few, and much appreciated, their appeal could only be to a highly educated minority. The underground, reflecting the changed social scene, draws on a more varied "catchment area," and shows a correspondingly greater variety of interests, media and idioms (greater even than the Surrealists, who substantially extended the Symbolist repertory, which was largely theoretical, as much for social as for practical reasons). Above all, the underground has extended itself into expressive idioms requiring no formal education, or representing a deliberate, therapeutic reaction against high culture and the models of mind which it assumes.

That the cachet of intellectual esoterism is lost there can be no doubt; that the loss is a spiritual gain seems very likely; and theories that underground art can appeal only to the slackly mindless seem unlikely in view of the popularity of material which can appeal only if some at least of its subtleties penetrate. (That much underground art is, like much Symbolist art, of little merit needn't be disputed.) One can reverse the proposition: the underground is a Symbolism which hasn't been penned into one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

particular block of the intellectual ghetto. The nearest equivalent of Symbolist hermeticism lies in the disdain of "squares" and "plastic people," and this is much more a matter of self-protection than elitism: otherwise, "I'd like to turn you on . . . for I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together. . . . You say goodbye, I say hullo. . . . The Magical Mystery Tour is dying to take you away. . . ." While the Symbolists dreaded the mob, the underground *are* the mob—come at last into some sort of inheritance, and its attendant dissatisfactions. Given affluence, leisure, and the intensifying allusiveness of the mass media, even the formally uneducated have acquired a historically unprecedented literacy (whether literary, visual, or musical). New classes seek artistic expression, and lend their strength to the protests of a dissident intelligentsia. In America the underground links with a general revolt against the pseudo-liberalism of a complacent WASP middle-class culture. As Rimbaud predicted, "Other horrible workers will come."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STEPHEN FARBER

Before the Revolution

THE ADVERTISING SYMBOLS FOR *If . . .* are a boy holding a machine gun and a magnified hand grenade, and although these symbols are relevant to the subject of the film, they have been shrewdly used by the publicists to misrepresent it and sell it as a subversive revolutionary manifesto. And hip, disaffected young people have been lining up at the box office, confident that they are going to see their story on film, the first celebration of student revolt. But these young people are bewildered by the movie itself; they don't find much to cheer at in *If . . .* and they seem to miss much of the film's comedy too. They have been lured into a movie that dares to mock *both* antagonists in the battle at Generation Gap.

But the film's first problem for an American audience is its provincial English public-school setting. Director Lindsay Anderson wants us to see the school as a microcosm of English society—an institution dominated by the same hypocritical religion, military brutality and upper class privilege that flourish even more viciously on the outside. But he lingers so long and so intensely on scenes that cannot be considered representative, that take place *only* in a boys' school—idle tortures and initiation rites and floggings, gymnastics and cheering rallies and enervating classes—that the connections between school and society become more and more tenuous. The virtue of the film is its specificity. It would be easy to say that the school equals the System, but that is such a bland equation that it is quite unfair to the film's witty detail and rich texture. *If . . .* is good enough to resist generalization. Yet perhaps this strength does imply a certain limitation of the film. David Sherwin's dialogue is brilliant, particularly in its observant mimicry of various kinds of official rhetoric, but the film keeps threatening to fall into parody. Its satire is almost always exactly on target, and the targets are really too easy to hit. The film does an expert job of dissecting the particular institution that it examines, but it needs another dimension—either more compassion or more rage—if it is to strike us as a truly visionary protrait of the cracks in Western civilization.

What gives *If . . .* a contemporary twist and an immediate relevance—and what is probably most baffling to the expectant young audience—is its skeptical consideration of the student rebel. Perhaps this one aspect of the film *can* be extrapolated. The fact that the school is so unrepresentative of the society may even help to make Anderson's criticism of young "revolutionaries" more widely applicable; at American high schools and universities, as in *If . . .*'s College

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

House, the fire of radical rhetoric often seems pathetically inappropriate to the trivial academic rules the students are fighting. (It also seems inappropriate because the university is not the true center of power and repression.) The film's disparagement of student rebellion is not to be confused with backlash hysteria, for Anderson clearly puts the blame for the rebels' pettiness and destructiveness on the institution itself. It is the school that teaches its pupils to shriek with hate when they twist their bayonets into victims; and when Mick, the young leader of the rebels, assaults the chaplain during a war games exercise, he is only practicing what the army preaches. The miniature society of College House is so distorted that any reaction against it, no matter how humane in impulse, is bound to be distorted too. And the rebellion of the three crusaders reflects the ignorance and insularity of their school. Because they are so isolated from the breadth of life in the world outside, these kids have lost all sense of perspective, all sense of what *matters.* The film shrewdly recognizes that the viciousness of the crusaders is the most insidious legacy of a sterile liberal education at the service of a demoralized, reactionary society.

The trouble with student rebels is that they are *not* true revolutionaries; the boys in *If . . .* have no real link with more profoundly disenchanted groups in their world. At one point one of the boys reads a newspaper article that reports "Every eight minutes someone dies of starvation in Calcutta," but it is all too remote from their lives to carry any impact. They don't really *care* about poverty. Photographs of Che Guevara are pinned to the walls of their study, but lost among other faces that do not always have such a clear connection to revolution—Nasser, the Pope, Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer, soldiers of different nationalities, a starving child, Playboy pinups, a Hells-Angels style motorcyclist. The boys are completely indiscriminate in the images of violence that they admire—the motorcyclist and the Establishment soldier excite them as much as the Negro rioter. Revolutionary figures quickly become pop heroes.

Anderson's criticisms of the rebels are very imaginatively and indirectly introduced into the film. Near the beginning one of the three crusaders, Wallace, is sitting on the toilet playing his guitar when a group of younger boys bring in one of their victims, and tie him upside down with his head dipping into an adjacent toilet. Wallace's only concern is the interruption of his private revery; the torture doesn't shock or upset him in the least. Only when he becomes a victim himself does his sense of outraged "justice" spring to life. We don't know at this point that Wallace will later sign a blood pact for "Liberty" and "The Resistance," but we are struck by his apathy toward the school's sadism.

There is another fine scene later when the three boys sit around delightedly imagining horrible violent deaths—a moth flying inside

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your ear, a nail driven slowly into the back of your neck, the Crusaders' technique of flaying victims and sending their skins home to relatives. Death is so remote from their own experience that they see it only in terms of a jokey schoolboy essay—"The Death I Would Prefer." But when Johnny grows serious for a moment and says, "Cancer's the worst. It took my mom six months to die," the others are silenced because they have no way of responding to the *realities* of death. They have no compunction about turning their machine guns on the entire school at the end; unacquainted with death except as a shadowy part of the glamorous Three Musketeers fencing game they play in gym class, they place no particular value on life.

What makes *If . . .* tricky to evaluate is its mixing of fantasy and reality, and its refusal to provide conventional movie hints that will enable us to tell the two apart. Anderson presents the boys' fantasies with a strange literalness. But I think he always keeps his distance. At the very start of the film we see Mick return from vacation in a black hat, his scarf wound around his mouth, his trunk on his shoulder; but he just passes in front of the camera for a moment, like a Dickensian highwayman accidentally lost in a contemporary school. This funny visual jolt is a nice introduction to the film's fantasy layer. We see Mick for just an instant as he would like to be seen—as a mysterious, romantic outsider, a Guy Fawkes of the dormitory. But then we find that he has been wearing the scarf to hide his forbidden mustache, and although he admires his boldness in the mirror, he quickly shaves off the mustache before anyone can see it; he is too frightened to bring this gesture of irreverence out into the open. Mick's melodramatic fantasy is pricked when we discover the essential furtiveness and cautiousness of his rebellion.

Malcolm McDowell, who plays Mick, contributes a fine characterization—he understands the insolent charm, the arrogance, contemptuousness, and fundamental *narrowness* of so many young rebels. When he and his friend steal a motorcycle on a day's spree in town, or daydream that they do (it is hard to decide just how much of this sequence is fantasy), they stop off at a cafe, and Mick engages in some horseplay with a young waitress there. He imagines their play turning into a nude tussle on the floor of the cafe, and after this fantasy gratification, the two boys take the girl out for a victory ride on the motorcycle; in a long shot we see them raise her above the cycle like a goddess of love and speed. Some people have interpreted this scene as a clichéd attempt to celebrate youthful buoyancy, but the image makes more sense as an affectionate, witty *parody* of youthful sentimentality about freedom. To take the image straight is to ignore Anderson's persistent vision of Mick's inadequacy. Even within this sequence we can notice Mick's nervousness when taunted by the sexually confident, husky-voiced waitress, a nervousness that subtly undermines the image of swagger and bravado that he would like to see in the mirror.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His fantasy of bravado is played most devastatingly against the reality of his impotence in the scene in which he and his two friends are caned by the house whips for being a "nuisance." When his turn for punishment comes, Mick throws open the doors to the gymnasium, Guy Fawkes once again, and struts in to accept the beating. After being caned more brutally than he anticipated, he is in tears, and his defiant shell has been broken. As he leaves, the head whip holds out his hand, and Mick takes it obediently, and contritely whispers, "Thank you, Rowntree." In a film like *Cool Hand Luke,* when the hero cracks under torture, we don't blame him, because the torturers are truly frightening sadistic monsters and the punishments truly grotesque. But the whips in *If . . .* are rather pathetic torturers; there's nothing the least bit menacing about them. We're not convinced Mick *had* to take the punishment, nor does the punishment itself strike us as really appalling, so his feeble "Thank you, Rowntree" is a biting indictment of him. When Mick is alone in his room afterwards, he shoots darts at the photographs on his wall, coldly but haphazardly—he fires at the breasts and buttocks of his Playboy nudes, at a family sleeping in bed, at the Queen. And only the most sympathetic teenagers are likely to confuse this irrational vindictiveness with revolutionary passion.

There are a few moments in the film when Anderson needlessly changes point of view, suddenly presenting a fantasy of a minor character (the housemaster's wife, the much-desired "scum" Bobby Phillips). Those moments are clearly flaws, but I am more sympathetic to the confusing ease with which the film slips in and out of the crusaders' fantasies. Many films—from Busby Berkeley to Fellini—have included outright fantasy sequences, but *If . . .* deals with subtler distortions of reality, the way in which we make slight adjustments in our perceptions to satisfy our fantasy images of ourselves more resoundingly—as in the startling first shot of Mick as Guy Fawkes, or a scene in which he swings down a rope into the gym like Tarzan, the ride with the girl on the motorcycle, or an interesting scene late in the film when the boys discover a bottled foetus in a locked cabinet of the school's storage room. There is no reason why this last moment, in the storage room, could not be a real occurrence (though the unaccountable appearance of the girl from the cafe warns us that it is at least part fantasy); we certainly cannot doubt that the school might keep a bottled foetus in preparation for biology classes. But the fascinated hush that falls over the group when they find the foetus suggests that the boys see it as something more than what it is, as a personally relevant *symbol* of the way in which the school freezes and deforms life. Their private obsessions give a strangely fantastic edge to reality. In these scenes Anderson has made some remarkably interesting experiments with subjective film-making in what is essentially a cold, dispassionate, objectively satiric film.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The final scene of the three crusaders setting fire to the auditorium during an end-of-the-term ceremony, then machinegunning teachers, visitors, even other students as they run outside is probably another purely fantasy gratification, but there is no visual signal that it is fantasy (though again, the presence of the waitress is a kind of signal); and there is no reason why it could not happen in reality. If the moment *is* real, it only confirms a familiar nightmare—violence may grow out of nothing more profound than adolescent neurosis and still succeed, almost in spite of itself, in drawing blood. On the other hand, if the scene is only fantasy, that doesn't change its meaning very much. Perhaps the fantasy may become reality at some later time—on a less grandiose and epic scale—or perhaps it never will; but the point is that these boys have been so warped by the school that their idea of a moral triumph is the same kind of barbarism they are supposed to be protesting in the institution's leaders. We are convinced that they will be unable to provide a humane alternative to the school's repressiveness—either in imagination or in deed, now or in the future. The degree of fantasy in the final scene may be unclear, but its skeptical attitude is perfectly clear and devastating.

But there is something unsatisfying about the conclusion. The assembly itself, like most of the film, is played for satiric laughs, and is undeniably hilarious, but it is hard to change mood once the scene shifts to the slaughter on the quad. And in fact, even during this slaughter, Anderson cannot resist making us laugh—when a fat ceremonial guard drops his armor as the shelling starts, when the school nurse throws back a hand grenade at the crusaders. These comic touches are very effective in encouraging us to distance ourselves from the purge and see it in a more ironic, less glorious way than it appears to the crusaders; but the comedy does cancel out some of the other effects that Anderson wants to achieve. The final shot is a lingering closeup of Mick's expression of intense hatred and sadistic relish as he fires his machine gun. It's an upsetting image, but really too strong for the film. Suddenly Anderson tries to frighten us; this image seems meant as an angry, prophetic, almost apocalyptic warning of the violence that awaits us on our once-placid playing fields. But the rest of the film is too cool and witty to suddenly scream of apocalypse. We may wish that the film had fury in addition to irony, but it never really is able to shock us, unsettle us, move us. *If . . .* is a fine, provoking intellectual critique of contemporary kinds of repression and rebellion, but it rarely provides an emotional experience. And one feverish concluding shot cannot supply a film with the passion that it has not previously been able to muster.

Haskell Wexler's first feature film *Medium Cool* has a good deal of the passion that *If . . .* lacks, with perhaps some corresponding loss of intelligence. Wexler, probably the finest cameraman in America

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(he photographed, among others, *America America, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, In the Heat of the Night, The Thomas Crown Affair*—films all inferior to his contributions to them), has written and directed the first major studio film that honestly confronts the convulsions that have been shaking American society in the last few years. Finally here is a movie that deals, intelligently not sensationally, with the material of today's headlines and the tenor of youthful radical protest.

Set in Chicago during the summer of 1968, *Medium Cool* tries to do too much—not exactly an uncommon failure of first films—but comes close to succeeding. Wexler began his career in documentaries, and there is some striking documentary footage in *Medium Cool*, and an interesting, sometimes brilliant attempt to blend this footage with fictional material. In some scenes that have clearly been contrived—for instance, a confrontation between the hero, a TV photographer, and a group of black militants—Wexler uses non-professionals and improvisation to add verisimilitude. But at the film's most interesting moments, Wexler does almost the opposite—he brings dramatic imagination to *cinéma-vérité* scenes. For example: The hero and his girlfriend attend a sadistic Roller Derby, where women and dwarfs draw blood for the pleasure of the spectators; this scene has clearly not been staged, but Wexler gives it a deliberate, eerie sense of *unreality* by his strange, sweeping camera movements and an incongruous, obscene nonsense ballad that he chooses for the soundtrack in place of natural sound effects. The scene is surrealistic, not realistic, and it is a successful example of Wexler's attempt to transform footage that we can recognize as raw and true into something more expressive and evocative. Wexler brings to his documentation of contemporary American violence and injustice a sense of very personal, very passionate outrage, flashes of visionary poetry.

Just the way that Wexler chooses to structure his film intensifies our awareness of an *ordering* intelligence behind the accumulation of documentary material. Near the beginning there is a scene recording a "rehearsal" of the Illinois National Guard for a street demonstration. Members of the Guard have dressed up as hippie agitators, and their colleagues go through the motions of beating them as they would real demonstrators. The sight of these crew-cut, beer-bellied men in hippie costume and carrying anti-war signs is bizarre, dislocating, funny and rather frightening. Again the image seems somehow larger, stranger, and therefore more illuminating than reality; it is an effectively outrageous image of the deviousness and absurdity and brutality of the American police. The film ends with some remarkable footage from the police riots at the Democratic convention, and because this links up with the practice session Wexler recorded at the beginning, his attempt to "use" Chicago for a comment about the death of freedom in America seems to have direction

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and continuity. In this documentary footage at the end, much of which we recognize from television, Wexler achieves an amazing effect—he has his lead actress walking through the *unstaged* melee. We have already come to care about her character in the fictional scenes of the film; she is from a poor rural area of West Virginia, relocated in Chicago after the death of her husband in Vietnam, and the photographer's growing involvement with her has begun to shake him out of his indifference to social problems. At this point she is looking for her son, who has been lost, and she gets caught up in the young people's demonstrations and in the police brutality. There are some astonishing long tracking shots of the frightened woman walking along with the demonstrators past police battalions and giant tanks and jeeps that make the streets of America look like settings from Kafka. Wexler plays rewarding tricks with perspecitve. Because we look at Chicago with this woman, a total stranger, a foreigner, we are forced to share her bewilderment and incredulity. At the same time, in spite of her confusion, the woman is almost instinctively drawn to the young demonstrators—whose cause she can hardly understand—as fellow outsiders, people who are alienated from mainstream America just as she has always been alienated on a more basic, less intellectual level. She feels an instant kinship with them that we too are allowed to feel. This dramatic identification with Wexler's character humanizes newsreel footage, involves us much more deeply in the Chicago demonstrations than our TV sets ever could.

Medium Cool is not always so forceful. The TV photographer is a convenient device for including a great variety of documentary footage, but a little too convenient; the film sometimes seems to want to take us on a Cooks Tour around contemporary America—the King and Kennedy assassinations, Resurrection City, the black revolution, the anti-war movement, Appalachia, Chicago are all dealt with, and the treatment is sometimes superficial. A more serious flaw is that the TV photographer remains a device, never a three-dimensional character. We know how we are supposed to interpret him—a man of our times who lives vicariously through the media, who is deadened to violence and apathetic to social problems, but who begins to thaw when he develops a *personal* relationship with one of the people he has always photographed from a distance. But unfortunately there is no difference between that one-sentence summary and the man in the film. He has no quirks, no eccentricities, no complexities; he never seems alive. (Robert Forster, who plays him, does not look quite alive either.) And without a flesh-and-blood protagonist, the film has no human center, no focus. The very last scene, the death of the photographer and the West Virginia woman in an automobile accident as they leave the demonstration, is gratuitous and basically false. Wexler wants to use the accident as a metaphor for the breakdown of order in America—the final proof of the apocalypse—but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it's really just an auto accident; it has no inevitability and no relationship to the more terrifying images of Chicago streets running blood. This ending shows that Wexler, perhaps not quite recovered from the influence of Mike Nichols and Norman Jewison, is still susceptible to the flashy effect. There are others in *Medium Cool*—a cut from a bleached woman lounging by a luxurious swimming pool to a row of Chicago tenements, a psychedelic discotheque scene that, although technically the most dazzling one yet filmed, is too much like all the others to be meaningful, the heavy ironic use of "Happy Days Are Here Again" on the soundtrack, over the final bloodletting in Chicago.

But in spite of all these weaknesses—and there are more—*Medium Cool* is the most exciting American film debut in a very long time. The film bursts with talent—Wexler's great visual flair, his feeling for improvisation and locale, the incredibly sensitive performance he has won from the child, the delicacy of the flashbacks of the heroine's West Virginia life (which are not sentimentalized—the West Virginia poor clearly have some of the same qualities of stupidity as the Chicago police, an ironic observation that the film might have explored further), above all the experiments with welding fiction to documentary; now the talent just needs to be disciplined. And in the meantime, *Medium Cool* can be appreciated for the grace with which it transforms journalism into art.

The Hudson Review announces

Poems by Ghalib

(Ghalib Centennial Year 1969-70)

Twenty *ghazals* translated by AIJAZ AHMAD in collaboration with WILLIAM STAFFORD and ADRIENNE RICH. With introduction by AIJAZ AHMAD.

Coming in our Winter issue

Also available in a separate booklet at 50 cents.

Discounts for bulk orders.

Time to publish your book?

We publish books, in many fields, that meet exacting demands. Long experience with fiction, non-fiction, belles-lettres, poetry assures professional editing and promotion, quality book design and manufacture. Publication is rapid —within three to four months! FREE: We invite your manuscripts for prompt editorial and cost appraisal. Write for answers to special questions, and for free literature on publishing, writing and contracts, with selections from our current book lists.

Write to EXPOSITION PRESS
Dept. 171J, 50 Jericho Turnpike
Jericho, N. Y. 11753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ULLI BEIER

Contemporary Art in New Guinea

EUROPEAN COLONIALISM HAS CREATED cultural vacuums all over the world. Political oppression, the introduction of "respectable" religions, the swamping of cultures with European commercial products have left millions of people in Africa and Asia bewildered and confused. Nowhere is this frightening process more apparent today than in New Guinea.[1] In Africa people have just begun to digest the Colonial experience. Independence has been achieved in a majority of African countries. And already it is apparent that Africans have not really been swamped by European culture as was believed a generation ago. Today African historians rewrite their own history and African sociologists interpret their own culture. African artists all over the continent have discovered a new and vital language. In New Guinea such a cultural renaissance is not yet evident. To come to New Guinea from West Africa is like travelling back half a century in time. Large sections of the country have only very recently been contacted by Europeans, others have had effective European rule for eighty years. In either case the disintegration of the native culture seems completed or at least inevitable. As yet few New Guineans are really conscious of what is happening to them, and there are few signs of a new identity or new forms of expression emerging.

The destruction of cultures in New Guinea has been far more complete than anything I have seen in Africa. In many communities one may speak of cultural suicide. At a certain point the community decides that they have no answer to the challenge of the Western world. Their tradition has not helped them to ward off European rule, nor has it helped them to understand or penetrate the white man's secret of power. Then one day the large men's houses are burnt down. The sacred meeting places and repositories of the tribe's magic power had been the very centre of all cultural activity for centuries. Now they are burnt, and with it the ritual images and ancestral symbols. The link with the past is cut. Initiation rites are discontinued. Christianity is tried out as a possible means of discovering the white man's secret. Needless to say it fails to supply this demand and the people remain listless, indifferent converts, or else get carried away by millenarian cults in a brief spell of hope. Very few New Guineans

[1] At present the western half of the island of New Guinea is administered by Indonesia and known as West Irian. The Eastern half is administered by Australia and is officially known as "The Territory of Papua and New Guinea." Papua is theoretically part of Australia, while New Guinea, the former German Colony, is a United Nations Trust Territory. In this article "New Guinea" refers to the Australian "Territory of Papua and New Guinea."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have had the opportunity to obtain sufficient education to enable them to see the whole process in perspective.[2]

There are a number of reasons why New Guinean cultures proved so much less resistant than African cultures to the impact of European rule. There is first of all the factor of numbers. Many language groups in New Guinea are just a few thousand strong. The most powerful language group (Enga) is probably 200,000 strong. In Africa, a so-called "tribe" could consist of eight or ten million people. Most African kingdoms were complex political organisations whose institutions had to be reckoned with even in the context of a modern nation. In a Yoruba local government council one third of the members are traditional chiefs even today, nine years after independence. New Guinean communities had no strong chieftaincy institutions that could survive under the changed circumstances. The Australian Administration replaced the old fightleaders first with *luluais* (appointed chiefs who were given a sort of railway porter's cap as a sign of office), later by elected councillors. There was hardly any resistance to such changes.

Another important factor is probably the time of contact. Many West Africans met Europeans in the sixteenth century. When the Portuguese visited Benin, they carried muskets, but their technology was not all that superior to that of the Binis. For some time they traded as equal partners. In New Guinea some people had the terrifying experience of having bombs dropped on their village during World War II, before they ever set eyes on a white man.

The cultural desert which New Guinea has become today is the result of this collapse of traditional cultures on the one hand and of the particularly pedestrian brand of Australian Colonialism on the other.

Australian rule in New Guinea was decidedly less brutal than, say, British rule in East Africa, let alone Belgian rule in the Congo. Australian Colonialism was patronising rather than oppressive. It was also uninspired. For a long time the Australians' only interest in New Guinea was as a military outpost. The lack of interest in the local population is drastically demonstrated by the nearly complete indifference to New Guinean art. The great collections of Sepik or Gulf art are to be found in America, Switzerland and Germany—not in Australia. The Australian administration made few efforts to keep art works in the country. Private dealers and missions (!) are making big money even today on the export of New Guinean art. Moresby has a "museum"—the basement of the House of Assembly—in which a collection is stored rather than displayed. There are no facilities for preservation. On three occasions since 1914 private collections donated

[2] Before the Second World War no New Guinean was educated beyond primary level. Until very recently secondary schools in the Territory stopped at class IV. A University was opened (after considerable United Nations pressure) in 1966. Intake 300 full-time students.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the Moresby Museum were sent on loan to Australian museums, because the Administration of New Guinea provided no space to house them. The large MacGregor collection that was sent to the Queensland Museum in Brisbane in 1914 is only just being unpacked.

The Australian suspicion of intellectuals and academics is carried to great length in New Guinea. Whereas British Colonial officials entered the service after a University degree and often received some further training in Anthropology, or Economics; Australian officer cadets are sent to outposts in the New Guinea bush straight from Secondary School. It is not surprising therefore, that the Administration tends to regard the University of Papua and New Guinea with some suspicion and that it is referred to among die-hard colonials as the "boys university" or the "Mau Mau factory."

There is a kind of fear here that University students at some stage or other may want to think for themselves, may want to make up their own minds, and may neither need nor want European advice. For the time being this country is ruled by a House of Assembly, with a majority of elected illiterate native members, who loyally vote with the Australian Administration. The few educated native members are treated with suspicion and are referred to as "bigheads." Such a climate is naturally opposed to the creation of new forms of expression, either in the literary or in the visual arts. The independence of mind and spirit that is the basis of any modern art is not exactly being fostered. For the first time now, the University of Papua and New Guinea supplies at least a potential audience for the arts.

Port Moresby has, of course, an Arts Council with an all white membership, which sponsors amateur performances of *The Boy Friend,* or even Ionesco's *Lesson.* Australian culture, already second hand at home, is here tended as a delicate hot house plant, carefully protected from any kind of New Guinean weather. Sometimes these plays are performed with considerable competence, but their relevance to the country's present condition is nil. The activity is harmless, though, because it does not impose itself on others. Far more destructive is the Art Council's annual art show and competition, a nightmare of mediocrity, in which prizes are given for *Landscape, Sea Scape, Portrait, Abstract,* etc. Walking through the exhibition that is put up with tremendous enthusiasm and which has hundreds and hundreds of boring entries, you might think you were looking at some amateur show in the backwoods of England or Australia. The most alarming thing about it is, however, that the Papuan artists produce exactly the same stuff as any well-meaning British spinster water colourist: pretty pictures, completely meaningless.

Australians are passionate amateurs, and so this show is given maximum official support. An adjudicator is flown in from Australia, who talks about the exhibits in pompous art jargon. The Administrator's wife performs the opening. The one newspaper we have gives it a splash. A good time is had by all. The annual art show puts the final

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seal of approval on the abominably outmoded and stuffy art teaching that goes on in the Territory. In one teacher's college the poor students had to gobble up a lot of irrelevant information on "Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting." In primary schools children are first taught to draw stick figures, then are gradually educated towards pedantic realism.

Needless to say, in this country of amateurs you don't have to be qualified to teach art. Being white is ample qualification to do almost anything. One university wife (!) informed me that she was going to teach art in a local school: "Of course I don't know anything about it, really. But I think I would recognise a good picture." Another University do-gooder was going to teach art at the Local Welfare Centre: "I haven't taught art before, but you've got to keep these boys off the street with something."[3]

There are a number of Europeans here, who feel that there is something wrong with it all, and then advocate rather naively that New Guineans should produce "their own" kind of art. What they mean is, that New Guineans should continue to produce masks and ritual images even when these objects have lost their function. But to continue a tradition outside its context invariably leads to tourist art. There are two main areas of tourist art in the Territory today: the Sepik district and the Trobriand Islands. In the Sepik district great quantities of traditional masks and carvings are turned out for tourist consumption. In some cases the Local Government Councils sponsor the carvers and act as dealers. The main outlet for these carvings are the artefact shops in Moresby, Australia and America. The Trobriand Islands have become a popular weekend excursion for colonial Europeans. Every Friday a planeload of tourists spills onto Kiriwina Island. The one hotel on the island organises tours in an open lorry. The moment the lorry stops in a native village it is surrounded by hundreds of men, women and children holding up carvings of wallabies, crocodiles, pigs, all of which they had been busy carving during the previous week!

Needless to say the artistic product becomes more and more meaningless under such circumstances. It has been pointed out to me that tourist art provides a good source of income for the local people. Too true: any form of prostitution is a good source of income.

The Gulf district, another of the great artistic centres of the past, has been spared the tourist trade so far. The area is hot and swampy and fairly inaccessible. It is a neglected backwater with little economic or other development. In most of the Gulf villages the people abandoned their own cultures in the early twenties. In a few cases the cultures survived up to the beginning of World War II.

It is here that an interesting revival of traditional art took place a few years ago. A Catholic missionary, Father Compte, quite hap-

[3] There is one notable exception: Goroka Teachers College, which has excellent art teaching.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hazardly asked an old man of Oru village, whether he could not carve him an Hohao board? The old man, whose name is Avavo Kava, said he would have a try. The father bought his first clumsy efforts and Avavo Kava tried some more. Suddenly, carvers were springing up everywhere in the surrounding villages and the Father bought what he could. It was a curious phenomenon, because no carvings had been produced in these villages for twenty-five years and none of the new artists had been carvers when they were young. Within three years the Father found himself with an attractive collection of some sixty odd pieces. They were all based on traditional Hohao boards, which were carved in the olden days to symbolise the spirit of an ancestor. Usually they consisted of a highly stylised face surrounded by strictly conventional ornament. Each bit of decoration had a specific meaning to the clan: certain flowers, trees, feathers, clouds, stars "belong" to different clans and must be shown on their Hohao boards. The new carvers, working outside the cultural context, used the symbols they remembered but there was little need to give the Catholic Father the "correct" clan design. The symbols became decoration. Meaningful signs became arbitrary elements of composition. Though the results were meaningless in terms of Orokolo culture, they were attractive pieces of design. The carvers had only one client and could therefore not repeat themselves. These new Hohao boards have not got the classical austere beauty of traditional carvings, but they are charming and lively and they do express the delight which the carver gains from his new freedom from convention: a kind of wild flowering. The revival was perhaps possible because in Orokolo there never existed an apprenticeship system in woodcarving. Carving was an activity for an old man who was no longer useful in fighting, hunting, fishing or gardening. Each man therefore started from the beginning, taught himself his own technique and tried to recreate tradition from memory. Avavo Kava and his colleagues saw nothing unusual, therefore, in starting to carve for the first time in their late fifties and early sixties.

This late flowering of a traditional art form was short-lived. For the Father, whose left hand didn't know what his right hand was doing, sold his entire collection to a craft shop in Moresby, thus opening up the area to the tourist trade. Even so, there would not have been a real future for this revival. For the artists who produced these attractive carvings live in a cultural no man's land. They live on the ruins of their tradition. They draw on the memory of their past. They have not acquired the sophistication or education that would allow them to reinterpret this tradition or to develop a new and individual language. Attractive though these pieces are, they remind one of the exotic and "useless" forms sprouted by some living creatures just before the final extinction of the species.

In spite of this depressing bleakness of the overall cultural situation New Guinea will, sooner or later, produce the artists who will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

create the vocabulary with which the present tensions, anxieties and aspirations of the country can be expressed.

For the time being, we cannot speak of Modern Art in New Guinea. We can, however, talk about the work of three men who can be taken as early symptoms of a cultural renaissance that may be one or two decades away. These three artists, Wanamera, Tiabe and Akis, have a number of things in common. They are all Highlanders. They all come from cultures whose main artistic expression consisted in simple shield designs and elaborate body make-up and decoration. The people of Okapa, Mendi and the Simbai Valley never produced the rich and varied imagery that is found in the Sepik district or the Papuan Gulf. Finally, all three artists are illiterate, with no schooling whatsoever and with only superficial contact with the Western world. Nevertheless, they have each created a personal medium, and, disregarding any tribal conventions, give expression to their highly personal visions.

Wanamera lives in the remote village of Asempa, some 7,000 feet up in the Eastern Highlands. The village is accessible by car in the dry season, but only a fourwheel drive can manage to climb the steep and winding road that is surfaced with large, loose river-stones. The village consists of eight or nine huts, and there is a disused schoolroom. The story is that the first village teacher absconded with the school cash and the school was never reopened after that. Consequently, there are only a few young people in the village who have had as much as two years of primary school. Several miles away in a valley is a Seventh Day Adventist Mission, which has persuaded most of the inhabitants as Asempa to receive "washwash" or baptism.

Though Asempa was "pacified" nearly twenty years ago, most of the adult men still carry bows and arrows, by force of habit. Weapons still form part of one's dress in this rugged area. Wanamera is a small man who might not attract our attention, if he were not one of the few people in the village wearing European dress. He walks about clumsily in shorts and heavy shoes and a coloured shirt. Until eight years ago he lived like everybody else in the village: he cultivated his vegetable garden, and planted a bit of tobacco in order to earn the money for his tax. Then his elder brother died, and in the afternoon of the same day Wanamera had a strange dream: his brother appeared to him and complained that the dead were not looked after properly in the village. The spot where the ancestors were buried was not even marked in any way. Because of this neglect, the life of the people of Asempa was without power and without future. Wanamera allowed his dead brother to guide him on the new way. He built a round hut on the spot where the dead lay buried. He went into the forest, felled a tree and carved the image of his brother. He decorated the figure with his brother's loin cloth and boar's tusk. Since then Wanamera has been making images of all the dead in the village. Today his mausoleum contains fifty odd woodcarvings, from three to five feet high.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Every day the hut is decorated with fresh cut flowers, which Wanamera plants specially for the purpose. On Saturdays and Sundays a simple memorial ceremony takes place in the hut, where a handful of people gather and eat and sing.

Wanamera is the first man ever to carve a human figure in his village. Nor has he travelled widely enough to see other forms of New Guinean art. His work is highly inventive; he has not yet found a convention or formula for the representation of a human figure, and as a result he creates each image anew, without reference to the preceding one.

Wanamera's faces stare or grin at us. The eyes can be deep holes, sometimes very close together, or they can be represented by rusty nails or coloured marbles. The mouth can be a narrow slit, or a huge gaping wound, or again it can be merely painted on. The proportions of these figures change all the time: sometimes the tender, shy body is attached to enormous, heavy legs. Sometimes a muscular body is supported by tiny legs. Once or twice the legs have simply been omitted. Perhaps his treatment of the arms and shoulders allows him the greatest range of expression: huge dangerous arms grow from massive shoulders, a modest hand is shyly placed on the body, helpless childlike arms dangle from an almost shoulderless body. Sometimes the arms are merely raised in flat relief on the body, sometimes they are painted on, sometimes left out. The genitals are sometimes left out, some figures have shorts painted onto them, others have a detachable penis. The figures are partly painted with bright touches of colour.

In spite of this strange lack of convention one can speak of Wanamera's "style." The common element in all these varied inventions is the expression: although some of the figures seem wild, others timid, there is a seriousness that grips them all. There is something helpless and touching even about the more fierce looking images. The total impact of Wanamera's mausoleum is mystical and festive. He has undoubtedly created an atmosphere in which people can remember the dead.

Wanamera's strange outburst of creativity drew on him the displeasure of both missions and administration. He has been described as a "cargo cult" leader and has been jailed several times. Cargo cult leaders are often accused of "spreading false rumours." Some of Wanamera's ideas can certainly be described as strange though no stranger than the beliefs of Seventh Day Adventists. (And would not a strictly rational society have to accuse all Christians of spreading "false rumours?")

The unexpected response of the white man to his artistic activities has turned Wanamera into a kind of martyr. He believes more firmly than ever that he is on the right road. There is no likelihood that his hopes will be fulfilled: his mausoleum will not bring the richer and greater life he is dreaming of to his community. Wanamera cannot

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understand the white man's world nor can he grasp the source of its power. He *does* understand and resent, however, the rape of his own culture. His art is a personal revolution, a manifestation of resistance and rejection. He pitches his vision and his dreams against the cool reality of the white man's rule. Though ultimately helpless, his strength is unbroken and his will is intact.

Wanamera does not live in the modern world—yet is no longer confined in tradition. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who drift in a spiritual and cultural no man's land, he has created his own world out of his loneliness and his agony. In this respect he does resemble the modern artist.

Tiabe's story is equally strange and equally moving. Tiabe comes from a village in the Southern Highlands that is several days walk from the nearest airstrip. He would never have made any real contact with the white man's world, if he had not suffered from periodic manic states. The villagers, disturbed by his strange behaviour, consulted the local Patrol Officer who had him bundled off to a mental hospital in Moresby. Here he spent several months recovering. The treatment of mental diseases poses almost insurmountable problems in Papuan New Guinea. No psychiatrist can learn the seven hundred languages spoken in New Guinea and next to nothing is known about the cultural background of many patients. In the absence of communication, treatment is often limited to drugs. Tiabe was like a manic depressive, whose depressive state was close to what we consider "normal." In the manic state he became happily noisy, often aggressive, though never actually violent.

I met him when Georgina Beier initiated an art therapy activity in the mental hospital early in 1967. Several of the patients produced attractive pictures, but Tiabe was by far the most powerful personality and the most artistically gifted. In his manic state he tended to roam about, sometimes he absconded for a few days; certainly he could not concentrate on painting. In his normal state, he was an enthusiastic and fresh painter.

He always worked without hesitation, setting down his lines firmly and purposefully. He preferred primary colours, bright red, yellow and blue and occasionally black. Although he limited himself in this way, his sense of colour was superb. His paintings express a fascination with the white man's world: aeroplanes, cars, ambulances, telephone poles, high-tension wires are the symbols that make up his paintings—rather than cassowaries, pigs, forests and hunters. The world of the white man's power fascinates him, and he is also horrified by it: his themes are "electric shock," "accident," "crucifixion"—all examples of the cruelty of this foreign world. There is a strange, surrealist contrast between the sinister themes of Tiabe's own "Brave New World" and the execution of these pictures. There is a purity of concept, an almost Mediterranean brightness and lightness and above all a sense of humour that make us think of Miró.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is something about Tiabe's work that is refreshingly modern. Alas, his artistic career was ephemeral. Once declared cured, he disappeared back into the Southern Highlands, where he is presumably now planting his taro like everybody else and raising his pigs. Had he remained in Moresby, he might well have become a conscious modern artist. But now he will be remembered for a handful of brilliant pictures which symbolise to us the vast untapped artistic resources this country has, and the incredible ability of New Guineans to break out of tradition into entirely new visual experiences.

Akis comes from Tsembaga village in the Simbai valley. It is an area that has had very little contact with the outside world. The first white man appeared in the valley in 1956. Simbai valley remained a "restricted area" until 1962. The first white people Akis came to know closely were American anthropologists, Ann and Roy Rappaport, for whom he worked as a linguistic informant. Meeting them must have aroused his desire to widen his experience and to discover a larger world. Soon after the Rappaports left Simbai valley, Akis signed up as a plantation labourer and worked for two years in Angoram and Madang. He took great pains to teach himself pidgin and became the first fluent pidgin speaker in his village. Since January 1968 he has been working for another anthropologist, Georgeda Bick.

His first drawings were made as an aid to interpreting. He scribbled birds and animals for which he knew no pidgin word. He made tentative sketches, trying to explain traditional shield designs. Other people might have regarded these drawings as mere doodles, but Georgeda Bick realised that there some something more. In January 1969 she travelled to Port Moresby and took Akis with her. She showed the drawings to Professor Bulmer and Georgina Beier, who both agreed that here was potential talent.

There were only six weeks in which this talent could be tapped, because at the end of that period he was to return to Simbai to continue his job as an interpreter for Georgeda Bick. It seemed doubtful whether anything could be established in such a short time, but Akis surpassed even the most optimistic expectations. At the end of the six weeks he had produced enough work of high quality for him to have a one man exhibition at the University of Papua and New Guinea!

Georgina Beier decided to introduce him first to *batik*. It seemed a relatively simple technique, and one that could be carried out even in a remote village. Moreover it provided Akis with some immediate motivation: putting designs on cloth opened up the possibility of providing his people in the village with *laplaps*. The beginning was not all that easy. A simple tool like a brush was quite new to Akis. He had never held a brush before and now he was to apply hot wax to cloth with swift movements, before the wax on the brush could get cold. But Akis is not put off easily by difficulties. At the opening of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his exhibition, a few weeks later, several people wore batik dresses made by him.

At the same time we asked him to make some vignettes for the literary magazine *Kovave*. His first drawings were still doodles—though fresh and lively—but limited in subject matter and completely lacking in composition. But when given large sheets of paper to work on, he discovered a scale in which he could express himself.

Akis drew the animals of the forest: the cassowary, the wallaby, herons, rats, lizards, snakes—as well as spirits and men. Many of his animal drawings are realistic in the sense that they are drawn with absolute knowledge of the anatomy and behaviour of the animal. His knowledge of these creatures is so intimate that even at this early stage of his artistic career he is able to describe their characteristics in unbroken line. Akis' inventiveness enabled him to make a dozen cassowary drawings without ever repeating himself. Even so the need to produce something new for his one client soon led him to invent creatures: *"ting ting bilong me tasol."*

Akis developed self-criticism almost at once. The speed of his development was staggering—it certainly surpassed anything in our own experience. It was almost as if his talent was mature within himself, merely waiting to be released. Akis' work has the freshness of a man who sees things for the first time. He is not burdened by any traditions or conventions. The traditional art of his village consists mainly of abstract shield designs. It is possible, though, that he inherited his sense of composition and texture from his culture.

At the time of writing, Akis is back in Tsembaga. For several months he will be interpreting for Georgeda Bick, until she returns to the United States. Will Akis return to Moresby to continue his artistic career? One can never be certain what the pressures at home might be. It is likely, however, that his fertile imagination will not leave him at rest. Ideas will crowd in on him, which will need expression. It is very possible that he will become the first professional, contemporary artist in New Guinea.

Many more artists will have to appear before we can speak of cultural survival, let alone cultural renaissance in New Guinea. But the integrity and strength of people like Wanamera, Tiabe and Akis give one hope. And as I am trying to complete this article a man walks into my house with a carved head under his arm. He is another Highlander, from Goroka, who works as a labourer in Port Moresby. He has never carved anything before, and he is not quite sure what made him do this piece. The work is crude, but the face is a fascinating piece of abstraction. Can it lead to anything? No one can tell at this stage.

But one thing at least is clear: the traumatic experience of the encounter with the West, the general state of confusion and depression, has left some individuals intact, whose courage and vision make them potential artists who will give expression to the new times.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, when it looked as if Violette Verdy would be making her home in London, she made a number of appearances with the Royal Ballet. If she had stayed in London and become a full-time member of the company, I think there would have been recognition by press and public there of the style that was as excitingly individual as Margot Fonteyn's, the technique that was as impressively brilliant, elegant and secure, the authority that was as regal; and recognition of the total Verdy operation as that of a dancer of the same magnitude as Fonteyn—which is to say, of one of the greatest dancers of our time. What was recognized in London would have been reported here; and this would have led the American press and public, when she appeared here with the Royal Ballet, to give her the attention and response Fonteyn gets, or if she returned to the New York City Ballet, to give her the superlatives and roars of approval that go to Melissa Hayden.

I am impelled to these observations by Verdy's performances last spring, beginning with the *Giselle* with Edward Villella in Boston, where they had done the work together for the first time a year earlier. This time they operated, individually and together, even more beautifully and effectively; and Verdy had me wondering at times whether I really *was* seeing the marvels I thought I was seeing. One such marvel was the slow movement around Albrecht, in Act 2, with which Giselle makes him aware of her incorporeal presence, and in which one saw the exquisite changing configuration of Verdy's pointed toes, legs, torso, head, arms and hands completed in breathtaking fashion by her fingers—those Verdy fingers that seem to be activated by intelligences of their own which keep their movements in constant fascinating relation with those of the rest of her body. (It was a shock, after this, to see Fonteyn's lovely movement, at the same point in *Giselle,* end in an extended hand those fingers were motionless.) And in addition to such marvels of dancing there were those of Verdy's acting, of which my memory recalls most vividly the utter desolation on the face she raised after her collapse at the disclosure of Albrecht's deception.

This year again the Boston Ballet provided Verdy's and Villella's great performances with an admirable context: the strongly danced Myrtha of Anamarie Sarazin, the believable Hilarion of Warren Lynch, the acceptable first-act *pas de deux* of Robin Adair and David Drummond, the excellent Wilis of the *corps.* But Balanchine's *Pas de Dix* demands virtuoso-caliber technique and stamina which not even the two principal dancers in the Boston Ballet's performance had. One discovers that while Balanchine's ballets are what ballet companies throughout the country need to win the interest of the public, they are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enormously difficult works which most of these companies are unable to perform well enough for the public to become interested.

With the New York City Ballet, later, Verdy was given her first opportunity to dance in Balanchine's *Raymonda Variations,* and demonstrated that she was the one who should have danced in it from the beginning. For, as in other instances—*Allegro Brillante, Ballet Imperial,* Tchaikovsky *Pas de Deux*—the idiosyncratic inflections and accentuations of her style gave the movements a new look that was enchanting. They did the same thing in the second-act divertissement of Balanchine's *Midsummer Night's Dream* a few nights after Allegra Kent had danced in it with her exquisite delicacy. And also in *Swan Lake,* in which Verdy's performance this time attained new heights in response to the superb partnering of Peter Martins and the embodiment of Prince Siegfried that was made extraordinary not only by his princely physical beauty, the intensity of his ardor and, at the end, of his grief, but by the joyous, delighted fascination with which he gazed at Odette in their early encounters—a dramatic stroke I cannot recall seeing in any previous performance.

In addition Martins danced for the first time in *Divertimento No. 15,* adding to its beauty and effect throughout with his unassertive grace, but especially in his second-movement variation with the unstraining, elegant execution of its bravura feats. And his single performance in *Apollo* calls for mention because it was even more beautiful and moving than his previous ones, and because in spite of this it was his only one of the season. Why this was so, and why Balanchine had the season's other *Apollos* disfigured by the monstrous embodiment of Jacques d'Amboise's distorted idea of what a Greek god should look and move like, I can't imagine. Nor, I might add, why there has been no *Apollo* with Villella for several years; and none with Conrad Ludlow, whose performance, taught to him by Lew Christensen, had the extra value of its accuracy in addition to its beauty.

If Villella were unwise enough to give Balanchine an ultimatum on the issue of *Apollo,* and, when Balanchine didn't yield on the issue, were to leave the company, Balanchine would have to put another dancer into Villella's role in *Rubies,* and this dancer presumably would be able to do the steps. But since these steps were contrived for Villella's individual capacities and style as a dancer, and even his personal characteristics,[1] another dancer, though he had the technique and stamina to do the steps, would not give them the appearance and effect they had when Villella did them. And a reviewer who wrote that this dancer's performance was preferable to Villella's would be someone with eyes that managed not to see what was happening on the stage, and to see instead what, for some reason, he wanted to see happening there.

In the actual situation it was Suzanne Farrell who unwisely gave Ba-

[1] It is amazing how Balanchine, seemingly unaware of anything in Villella but a body with capacities for dance movement, should reveal the extraordinary perceptions of Villella as a person that one sees in *Tarentella* and *Rubies.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lanchine the ultimatum (on behalf of her husband, Paul Mejia) and left the company, and who had to be replaced by other dancers—in *Diamonds* by Kay Mazzo, in *Liebeslieder Walzer* by Karol von Aroldingen, in the second movement of *Symphony in C* by Mazzo or Kent. And it was concerning these dancers' performances that Clive Barnes wrote what he wanted to believe about them. He "rather preferred" Mazzo in *Diamonds* for her "quieter qualities . . . pleasingly secretive passion . . . and, most of all, a touching vulnerability—she is the kind of girl any decent man would offer his subway seat to." He implied similar preference in the statement that in *Symphony in C* Mazzo was "exceptional," and that, "avoiding the stylistic mannerisms of her predecessor—who here had an overfondness for kissing her knee—she was elegance itself." And he did so again in the statement that the European dancers in the New York City Ballet "always seem to have had a particular sensibility for 'Liebeslieder Walzer,'" a ballet which created a European world of vanished sentiment; and that von Aroldingen, "yet another European-born dancer . . . immediately revealed a natural feeling for the ballet" and "was absolutely enchanting, dancing with just that sense of deliquescence the ballet demands." (By implication Farrell, as an American who lacked the European's natural feeling for this ballet, had danced it less well; and it followed that since all the girls who had appeared in it except Verdy, and all the boys except Peter Martins this year, had been Americans, the work hadn't ever been danced properly.)

Actually *Diamonds* was made by Balanchine for Farrell's tall body and her style of large movement, neither of which Mazzo has; and although she danced it beautifully, anyone who had seen Farrell's performance could see that Mazzo's was a lovely miniature which didn't produce the effect of Farrell's grandly sweeping movements. And in *Symphony in C* too, originally made for tall Tanaquil Le Clercq, those movements of Farrell's—including the tremendous extended *arabesque penché en pointe* that Mr. Barnes referred to as "kissing her knee"—were more impressive than Kent's exquisite smaller-scaled performance, which I saw, and presumably than Mazzo's, which I did not see. As for the Farrell role in *Liebeslieder Walzer*—originally made for tall Diana Adams, and given the stamp of Farrell's idiosyncratic style—though von Aroldingen was fairly tall and equipped to produce an approximation of Farrell's performance, anyone who had seen Farrell could see that von Aroldingen did achieve only an attractive approximation of what Farrell's extraordinary powers made breathtaking, and occasionally was unable to achieve even this adequate approximation. Thus, in one of the most striking details of the work Farrell, her hands held in support by her kneeling partner, bent over him in an arabesque on her flat foot, then rose on its pointed toe effortlessly, her other leg pointing straight up, and held that position for an instant before coming down. When she did this one was conscious

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only of the stunning climactic force of what one saw; but when von Aroldingen managed to get up on her pointed toe and came right down again, one not only saw a movement with no climactic force, but was aware of how difficult even this ineffective movement was for her.

To the admiration for Balanchine he professes constantly Mr. Barnes adds constant correction and instruction; and he ended his report on *Liebeslieder Walzer* and von Aroldingen with a paragraph about the "two strange flaws" in the work. One was that the boys at one point arrange chairs in a diagonal line for the girls to sit on, which "would be perfectly appropriate in a Lichine or Massine ballet-bouffe," but is strange in what Mr. Barnes characterized as the naturalistic choreography of *Liebeslieder Walzer*. The other was that "in the first duet between Miss Verdy and Mr. Magallanes it is the man who is constantly putting his hand across his face, in a gesture more easily identified as one of coquetry rather than rapture. It should surely be the girl doing this." So it should if it were a gesture of coquetry; but it isn't. The Verdy-Magallanes duet he referred to is not their first, but a later one in the succession of pieces for two or three or more dancers that are not just dances but danced dramatic episodes in which one sees the relations of the dancers change. Verdy in particular begins by dancing gaily and flirtatiously with Magallanes and the others; but the later slow duet Mr. Barnes referred to is one of dark estrangement, which she exhibits in the face she turns away from Magallanes, and he exhibits, at one point near the end, in the hiding of his face from her with his hand. It is beyond belief that anyone looking at them here should see coquetry in what they do; but Mr. Barnes managed it, demonstrating again that he is a dance critic who lacks the first essential of being able to see correctly what is presented to his eye. Moreover the steps of Verdy's and Magallanes' feet in this duet are those one might have seen in a nineteenth-century Viennese ballroom; but not the movements of the rest of their bodies that make it a dance of estrangement: these were produced by Balanchine's imaginative use of his idiosyncratic dance vocabulary, and make the choreography of the piece not naturalistic but fantastic. This is true of the other danced dramatic episodes of the work, whether serious or gay, in which the basic waltz steps are blended with imaginative Balanchine movements (most clearly true of the dances in the second part, in which the 19th-century ball dresses and high-heeled shoes of the first part are replaced by ballet skirts and toe shoes); as it was true, let me add, of the danced episodes and games in Balanchine's great 1932 ballet, *Cotillon,* which Mr. Barnes didn't see (not that it would have made a difference if he had seen it). *Cotillon* had a delightful bit of *fantaisie Balanchine* in which the men stood behind the gilt chairs they had placed together for Riabouchinska to recline on languorously as though on a luxurious sofa and receive their homage; *Liebeslieder Walzer* has the episode which begins with the men placing chairs in a diagonal line for the girls to sit on and swing an arm gracefully from side to side. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Barnes's faulting Balanchine for this non-naturalistic detail was another instance of his inability to see correctly what is presented to his eye—to see that the detail is a manifestation of the *fantaisie Balanchine* operating from beginning to end of the work.

These comments on dancers and choreography were only minor instances last spring of the Barnes operation, in which—unable to see what is actually happening on the stage, and thus, in effect, not tied down to it—Mr. Barnes is free to let what an editor I know characterized aptly as his rat's-nest mind produce his irresponsible chatter about imagined happenings. The major instance was his review of Jerome Robbins' new ballet, *Dances at a Gathering*. "Genius is simple, only talent proffers complications," was his opening statement about the work he wanted to have seen: the work that was "one of the most significant evenings in the American theater since O'Neill"; the work that left the answer no longer in doubt to the question "who—when the time eventually comes, in say 40 years, for Balanchine to retire—could possibly succeed him." It was a work whose choreographic invention had "something of [the] dazzling, virtuoso ease" of Balanchine, and whose "pattern of feeling [and] gestural language . . . to some extent adapted from Balanchine" were evident when "the dancers glance at one another with a loving awareness," and presumably when "they gesture to one another with the affection of friends, and they share life together"; a work that had also, indeed, "the feeling for the community, life and the earth" of Tudor's *Dark Elegies,* its "ultimate triumph" being perhaps that "it presents, with complete conviction, people walking and holding hands. People not hiding behind character, but being themselves"—like "three girls walking with innocence and tenderness under a warm night sky"; a work that in this feeling captured "Chopin's feel . . . for that peasant assurance of the earth beneath him and the sky above" in his music; a work that exhibited in other ways, if not Balanchine's "mandarin musical taste," then the "musicality . . . down to his eyebrows" that enabled Robbins to "choreograph not the musical beat of a score but its inner logic," to "hear the second voice, caress the internal rhythm."

My eye, on the other hand, sees the operation of genius in the unending flow and variety of excitingly beautiful and intricate movement that Balanchine's manipulation of his richly developed personal ballet vocabulary produces in the hour-long series of pieces to Brahms's *Liebeslieder Walzer;* and it saw mere talent operating even in the best that Robbins produced for the hour-long series of Chopin pieces. Thus it saw only the moderately attractive use of a limited conventional ballet vocabulary in a few pieces; and in others it saw the attempt to push beyond those limits, the straining for novelty and effect, produce details as outlandish and unattractive as the one in which Patricia McBride, her body extended in the air in a lift, drew her legs up into a squatting position, or the one in which Mazzo cycled in the air as she was carried across the stage. My eye saw Robbins' gift for comedy in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the amusing piece in which Kent kept on dancing charmingly and hopefully as one boy after another showed interest and began to walk beside her, but then lost interest and drifted off; it saw the perceptive Robbins eye in the etude, to the Etude Op. 25 No. 4, made of Verdy's striking manner of pointing up the movements a choreographer gives her to do. But it saw in some pieces the Robbins gift for applause-getting show-biz tricks and stunts, the gift also for show-biz tear-jerking folksiness in that piece in which the three girls sauntered across the stage, their hands clasped behind their backs and their faces turned up to the sky; and it saw the Robbins addiction to attempts at profoundly meaningful simplicity in the final piece in which the dancers stood motionless facing the audience, their eyes following something that moved across the sky. In the pattern of feeling and gestural language of the folksy and pseudo-profound episodes my eye saw nothing adapted from Balanchine, and nothing related to Chopin's music, in which my ear heard no feeling for earth and sky. What my eye and ear did note instead was the occasional misfit of Robbins' choreography and the music, most glaring at the return of the stormy opening section of the B-Minor Scherzo, and the amazing lack of sensitivity to the character of the closing section of the very first piece, the Mazurka Op. 63 No. 3: to this music of quiet retrospective reflection and summation Robbins had Villella do one of his high-powered crescendos of spins and leaps around the stage.

The few good pieces would have made an attractive 15 or 20-minute work; but with the numerous poor ones added to make it a Big Work and a Big Event for Mr. Barnes, it was, for me, a big bore. And not only for me: my guest at one of the performances, an experienced actor and director who once exclaimed after a new Balanchine work: "The fact is that the important things happening in the theater today are happening here," exclaimed now with a laugh after the Robbins work: "I thought it would never end! I haven't seen anything like that since the stage shows that were sent around to the big movie theaters years ago!" But as he said this the audience was roaring its enthusiastic approval of the Robbins work. Robbins is not, then, the man who when Balanchine retires could provide the company with ballets continuing where Balanchine's left off, but rather the man who could provide it with the kind of entertainment miscellanies the public enjoys more than Balanchine's ballets.

The successful Robbins ballets for me have been the ones in which his powers have served the gift—which is to say, the sharply perceptive eye and mind—for comedy that I mentioned earlier: *Fancy Free,* the Mack Sennett ballet in *High-Button Shoes,* the sleepwalking ballet in *Look, Ma, I'm Dancin', Afternoon of a Faun.* They don't include *Interplay,* which is, for me, as unsuccessful in its strenuous attempt at humorous cleverness as the Morton Gould music it goes with. Leonard Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* is an attempt at something much, much more sophisticated than the Gould piece, with results in which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the pretentiousness is equalled by the awfulness. And John Clifford's choreography for it last spring was in something very much like the excessively clever style of *Interplay,* made even worse by the additional cuteness and archness.

With the transfer of Mazzo to *Diamonds,* the Mimi Paul role she had danced in *Emeralds* was assigned to Kent, who danced it exquisitely, but without the effect of the pointed style of Paul, which Mazzo had reproduced. On the other hand it was a pleasure to see Kent's lovely Terpsichore again after several years in the *Apollo* with Martins, which had Marnee Morris' excellent Polyhymnia and von Aroldingen's new and good Calliope. And though Mazzo didn't look like a queen she danced Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* beautifully, and acted convincingly in the angry confrontation with Oberon and delightfully in the humorous scene with Bottom. Von Aroldingen, the new Helena, and Sara Leland, the new Hermia, performed well (because I was watching them with special attention I also saw with new awareness what they were dancing—Balanchine's extraordinary adaptation of ballet idiom to imaginative purpose in now the solo of Hermia's frightened search for Lysander, now the *pas de deux* of Demetrius' violent rejection of Helena, now the *pas de deux* of her bewildered resistance to the ardor of Lysander, now the *pas de trois* of Lysander's wooing Helena and rejecting Hermia); and Morris was a superb new Hippolyta. And I must mention the excellent Third Theme of Carol Sumner and Michael Steele and Choleric Variation of Gloria Govrin in a *Four Temperaments* in which Richard Rapp's was the first satisfactory Phlegmatic Variation since Todd Bolender's.

The Royal Ballet's opening program offered two new works of Frederick Ashton, *Enigma Variations,* a setting of the Elgar score, and *Jazz Calendar,* a setting of an elaborately uninteresting piece by Richard Rodney Bennett. It pleases Mr. Barnes to write about an imagined Ashton who is Balanchine's equal in his use of the choreographic medium and in the feeling for music he exhibits in that use. And one wishes Ashton really were the master of a ballet vocabulary and style as richly developed as Balanchine's, and really could, like Balanchine, produce with it movement which not only was exciting in itself but was like a line of counterpoint in the way it completed the music and added to its meaning; for then there would be additional ballets as exciting to see as Balanchine's. But in reality Ashton has a limited conventional ballet vocabulary with which he produces bland sequences that at best are agreeable, but most often are boring, to look at, and that do no more than conform to the beat and character of the music. This was to be seen last spring in his new *pas de deux* for Florimund and the awakened Aurora at the end of Act 2 of *The Sleeping Beauty,* the music of which was the entr'acte Balanchine used in 1945 for a *pas de deux* for Danilova and Franklin. I retain only the image of Franklin walking backward out of the wings, leading a regal Danilova on her points; but I remember that what followed was an enthralling se-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quence of grand classical movement which enlarged the music it flowed out of; whereas in the Ashton *pas de deux* last spring—"one of the greatest of all Ashton pas de deux," said Mr. Barnes—one saw an attempt to give a new look to the few old lifts and turns and leaps, and thus to give to the sequences of movement an appearance of the life they didn't have—a pretense of producing something that actually produced nothing.

Ashton has a more modest view of himself—or at least had it in 1949, when a friend reported him as wondering what, after seeing so much of Balanchine's work, America would think of *his* babblings. But that was being a little too modest; for the babblings included two superb comic pieces, *Façade* and *Wedding Bouquet*. And comedy still seems to be what he is best at: almost the only good things in the new works last spring were the comic bits for the eccentrics among the friends of Elgar one saw in *Enigma Variations,* and the one in "Thursday," among the night-club-style pieces in *Jazz Calendar*. Most of the other attempts to show in movement what Elgar tells us about a friend in one of the variations were unsuccessful. Ashton could realize the "dance-like lightness" of "Dorabella" in a charmingly sprightly dance that communicated her gaiety, though not her pensiveness; he could have "B.G.N.," an amateur cellist, play the cello; but his visual demonstration of "Winifred" 's "gracious personality" that "is sedately shown" in the music was uninteresting; and his visual representation of the deep friendship between Elgar and "Nimrod" had "Nimrod" placing a hand on Elgar's shoulder and looking long and meaningfully into his eyes, then the two beginning a Tudor-like joint prance around the stage, and at the end Elgar's wife joining them in a final solemn exchange of glances. And while the other danced portraits were not as bad as that, they weren't good. All were performed well—in particular "Dorabella" by Antoinette Sibley, and the eccentrics by Alexander Grant, Brian Shaw and Wayne Sleep. And Grant was the excellent performer in *Jazz Calendar*'s "Thursday." Julia Trevelyan Oman's Victorian set and costumes for *Enigma Variations* were charming; Derek Jarman's sets and costumes for *Jazz Calendar* were what one would see in night-club sketches.

As for the Royal Ballet's other new works, its newly designed and staged *Sleeping Beauty,* Fonteyn's and Nureyev's performances in this ballet, *Swan Lake* and *Giselle,* the performances of the younger dancers—in reply to my request for seats for these the Hurok management's press chief informed THE HUDSON REVIEW that he could give me only seats for the opening program and an admission to the viewing room (in back of the Orchestra) for one Fonteyn-Nureyev performance, which a critic of a magazine with so small a circulation normally wouldn't receive, but which he offered me because of his respect for me. My immediate reaction to this was that I would accept the seats for the opening program only if the Hurok management would add seats for a later program with the remaining new works, so that I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could at least report on all of these; and it did send me tickets for these two programs. But after I had seen the first one I had time to think about the matter. I didn't challenge the Hurok position on critics of small-circulation magazines when I transferred from *The Nation* to THE HUDSON REVIEW in 1957 because in practice I didn't need to: writing once in three months in THE HUDSON REVIEW, instead of every week in *The Nation,* I could deal with only a small number of carefully selected events—for example, only with the new productions of the Metropolitan Opera; and what I asked of the Hurok management I nearly always received. The Bolshoi Ballet's *Giselle* with Ulanova was something I didn't think I could expect tickets for; the Royal Ballet's new *Swan Lake* with Fonteyn and Nureyev I was refused tickets for; but with those rare exceptions the Hurok management gave me the tickets I needed for the foreign ballet companies. I owed this departure from normal Hurok practice to the press chief's respect for me; but thinking about the matter now I realized that I owed it also to his awareness that his respect was shared by other people—specifically those who had been reading me for years in *The Nation* and were now reading me in THE HUDSON REVIEW; that they included not just the people who bought the magazine but those who read it in university periodical rooms; that they constituted an intellectual group which it was desirable to reach through my reviews; and that interest aroused by my reports did in fact cause members of this group to attend the performances of the foreign ballet companies. What was true ten year ago was even more true today: THE HUDSON REVIEW was now being read by a greater number of people; but whereas ten years ago, and as late as 1967, my requests were granted, this year the press chief had been able to offer me seats for only one program of the Royal Ballet and to add only one more. I took this to mean that the Hurok management had reached the point with the Royal Ballet where it could do without the intellectual group and without the critic it read—which seemed to me as insulting to the readers of THE HUDSON REVIEW as to me. Mr. Morgan agreed; and he agreed also that the tickets for the second program of the Royal Ballet should be returned, and that I should explain after my review of the first program why I didn't report on the rest of the Royal Ballet's season and wouldn't report on any Hurok event hereafter.

Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* was one of the staples of the repertory in which the legendary singers Bernard Shaw wrote about were presented at Covent Garden and the Metropolitan; and it was still performed at the Metropolitan when I began to hear opera there. But I didn't hear any of those performances of 1914-15 with Hempel, Destinn and Caruso; and all I knew of the work until last spring were the few excerpts on the early records of Hempel, Destinn, Slezak, Jadlowker, Jörn and Caruso, which were impressive evidence of Meyerbeer's powers in melodic writing. The American Opera Society performance last May offered the huge work with huge cuts—quite possibly the ones

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shaw denounced for their damage to dramatic sense; but they left enough of what turned out to be merely the workman-like writing with which Meyerbeer filled out the five-act structure of the "grand" opera of his period to establish for me that the pieces of impressive melodic writing were all that was important in the work.

Those pieces of melodic writing are impressive only when they are sung by singers with the extraordinary voices and technique they require; and the American Opera Society's performance had only one such singer, Beverly Sills, whose voice in *"O beau pays"* didn't have the heart-piercing loveliness of Hempel's, but was—except for an occasional edged tremulousness—agreeable to the ear, and an instrument completely under her control that she used with breathtaking accuracy and agility in the spectacular high-ranging florid passages. But the tenor Tony Poncet managed to produce the high B-flats and climactic D-flat of Raoul's duet with Valentine only as iron-voiced yells; Angeles Gulin's high notes in this duet and elsewhere were discordant screams; and to these was added the unfocussed baritone hooting of Joshua Hecht, the St. Bris. One was grateful, therefore, for the agreeable baritone that Thomas Jamerson, the Nevers, used with musical style and dramatic point; for the rich bass that Justino Diaz, the Marcel, used effectively; and even for Kay Creed's merely acceptable singing of the Page's aria. Reynald Giovaninetti conducted competently but without musical distinction.

An event of major importance is the reissuing of the voice-and-piano score of Musorgsky's own *Boris Godunov* that has long been out of print.[2] The Rimsky-Korsakov version is usually referred to as an orchestration; but this ignores the decisive fact that what is re-orchestrated is not Musorgsky's melody, harmony, rhythm, phrase structure, but Rimsky's rewriting of that melody, harmony, rhythm, phrase structure. Rimsky considered this vandalism to be justified by "the fragmentary character of the musical phrases, the harshness of the harmonies and modulations, the faulty counterpoint, the poverty of the instrumentation, and the general weakness of the work from the technical point of view." But anyone playing through the reissued score of Musorgsky's original work will discover, as I did years ago, that nothing in the musical phrases, harmonies, modulations and counterpoint calls for correction; that every detail of his writing is wonderfully right and effective and achieved with assured mastery by extraordinary powers of imaginative invention operating with incandescent adequacy for every demand of the text. And if the promised Covent Garden production of the Musorgsky original materializes and is recorded, one will hear the same rightness of Musorgsky's own orchestral coloring of his writing.

[2] BORIS GODUNOV, by *Modeste Musorgsky*. Oxford University Press. The complete original text edited in accordance with the autographed manuscripts by Paul Lamm. $26.00 (paperback), $30.80 (hardcover). A full score is now in preparation and should be available this Fall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERBERT LEIBOWITZ

The Muse and the News

TWO INSCRIPTIONS TO PUT on the masthead of this quarter's poetry gazette: "Poetry is news that stays news" (Ezra Pound) and "It is difficult/ to get the news from poems/ yet men die miserably every day/ for lack/ of what is found there." (William Carlos Williams) There are no simple guidelines for the poet in gathering the news of his day and setting it into the permanent form of a poem. The contours of his intelligence, of course, must be large and inclusive: he is, after all, a writer of obituaries and advertisements, of sensational murders and sports, offering recipes, editorials, and even gossip. He needs a nose for lurid and dull facts and a flair for their recording. From his place in the present, he gives of himself, attests sympathy, abruptly questions and leaps beyond the topical in order to "fetch you whoever you are flush with myself," as Whitman said and did. Armed with the high-powered lens of his imagination, the poet scans the crowded terrestrial landscape of the past—current events are a branch of history and civics—and, if lucky and accurate, sees the hairline cross-hatchings of self and society, the contiguities of his own and other moral universes. His beat, in short, is life, his style the obstetric instrument by means of which, in Norman Mailer's phrase, "the dark deliveries of the necessary" are brought to light. Like Whitman, he must trust his nuclear self as transcriber of the wars, expositions, vanity fairs, and issues of his time, from two vantage points: a stroller on Broadway and, as it were, *sub specie eternitatis.*

Notebook 1967-68,[1] Robert Lowell's most important volume since *Life Studies,* shows how a poet can be of his time yet avoid mere journalistic notation. A sonnet sequence which Lowell wishes us to take as a single continuous poem, it is not restricted to that incredible year of assassinations, demonstrations, and bloodying of heads. Rather, in the entries the destinies of Man in History and the history of a man come together concussively. As he nears the "Golden Middle," the poet thinks increasingly about death and himself as part of "the going generation," "the old United States of William James,/ its plaintive, now arthritic, optimism" a painful anachronism.

Lowell has always been favorably placed, by virtue of his New England ancestry, to understand the violence of our history and the moral stench of power. It has been a major theme of his poetry from

[1] NOTEBOOK 1967-68, by *Robert Lowell.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the beginning of his career, but in *Notebook 1967-68* it generates brilliant meditations on the apparently aimless sequences of force and the people who are its agents. History appears to him the bloody handiwork of what Emerson called "the dynastic oppression of submind," of "Despotic Gangsters" like Attila, Caligula, Hitler, Napoleon, and Stalin vying for senseless prizes whose slogan is the Fascist cry, "*Viva la Muerte!*" (Long live death!) They are a goiter on the body politic, epidemic down the centuries, "something inhuman always rising on us,/ punching you with embraces." The innocent are the victims of this violent doubleness of things. History lacks the grandeur of an Aeschylean tragedy of human sacrifice, tawdry revenge, intrigue, and imperial corpses, which at least posits some ultimate cosmic law. Lowell personalizes this mindless force and its enormous waste, as in this vivid portrait of Attila:

> Attila mounted on raw meat and greens
> galloped to massacre in his single fieldmouse suit,
> he never entered a house that wasn't burning,
> could only sleep on horseback, sinking deep
> in his rural dream. . . .
> this sedentary nomad, the "He who has, has";
> who wondered why the ancient world collapsed,
> then also left his festering fume of refuse,
> old time, dead vermin, ashes, eggshells, youth?

Thus the poet keeps his vigil with night thoughts about the earth's sealed spaces, a grotesque *lebensraum* or enclosure where a pair of rats kill the rest and then breed a clan, where death strikes as Hitler or cruel accident; all the oxygen in the air evaporates, leaving the poet gasping for breath:

> Who will contest the conqueror his dirt,
> spaces enough to bury what they left,
> the six million Jews gassed in the space to breathe?

No wonder his mind is "a rocked and dangerous bell." Yet in spite of these horrors "an extending potency" emerges; "the breath/ of the world risen like the ripe smoke of chestnuts" dispels the chilling murk of despondency and brings a music of consolation. There is no shelter against the atomic blasts of time, but there is an abatement of pain, and through the artifices of words and marriage (and the pleasures of friendship) a temporary unity is attained in which the mind is not all.

Lowell is more Hebraist than Hellenist—he is governed by "strictness of conscience" rather than "spontaneity of consciousness," though he longs for the "windfall abandon of Giorgione,/ Renaissance idle-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness," the heart's ease of self-forgetfulness. "I have lived without/ sense so long the loss no longer hurts," he confesses. Nevertheless, the intervals of "swimming in the sperm of gladness" have lengthened; there are "days of pardon."

Describing his aims in *Notebook 1967-68,* Lowell comments: "My meter, fourteen line unrhymed blank verse sections, is fairly strict at first and elsewhere, but often corrupts in single lines to the freedom of prose. Even with this license, I fear I have failed to avoid the themes and gigantism of the sonnet." His fear is well grounded, but does it matter? Not much, I think. Like Shakespeare's sonnets, the sections of Lowell's notebook take up the themes of sex, love, time, marriage, death, immortality through art and children, with an agonized confidence in what will live after: "common the clay, kingly the workmanship." But the fourteen lines *are* troublesome: the eye, like the poet's experiences, wants to break through the barrier of the stanza.

Lowell also seems haunted by an anxiety that the poems are not unified, for he insists that they are "not a conglomeration or sequence of related material," but contain a plot. But what kind of plot can a notebook have? He has given us a *comédie humaine* filled with personages from Harpo Marx to Rembrandt to Eugene McCarthy; the setting changes from Maine to Mexico to New York City; the abundance of incident, anecdote, and motive is richly complicated; and some poems are dramatic entries advancing the poet to the point where he can say: "The readiness is all." Causality, however, is too broken to acquire the status of plot, and Lowell is not an actor, as hero or antihero, on the stage of history. Yet his anxiety is baseless. Especially after a second reading, the poems begin to group themselves in constellated structures: the structure of memory as the episodes and emotions of half a century and the last hour pass in review; the calendar year; the cycle of the seasons; the continuity of the generations —the first poem is about Lowell's daughter and the last titled "Obit"; the poet as the center of concentric circles: domestic, literary, Dantean, Emersonian; and finally, juxtaposition: two poems on the Pentagon March in which the poet feels like a green Union Army recruit stepping off briskly to the Battle of Bull Run only to flee with a "cowardly, foolhardy heart" from the M.P.'s are followed by a poem paying tribute to his ancestor Charles Russell Lowell, who, "bound to death" in another Civil War battle, dies with heroic indifference. And so on.

Whether or not *Notebook 1967-68* (the title is clumsy) achieves the formal shape Lowell intended is a moot question that need not concern us, for the book succeeds by its astonishing particulars and scope. The language is an active agent of the poet's virile intelligence, alive with subdued gaiety. Lowell "attests sympathy," as in two delicate poems to Allen Tate upon the death of his baby son. "The poem is a capsule," William Carlos Williams wrote in his *Auto-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

biography, "where we wrap up our own punishable secrets. And as they confine in themselves the only 'life,' the ability to sprout at a more favorable time, to come true in their secret structure to the very minutest details of our thoughts, so they get their specific virtue. . . . The poem [is] the toughest certainty of continued life that experience acknowledges." The burden of Lowell's notebook is the difficult winning through to this "continued life." Art is consolation because it brings the glad tidings of "the eternal return of earth's fairer children," with "their fear of life," their vulnerable impossible love, and their "loyalty beyond abasement." But art and man must answer the question with which Lowell ends his book: "After loving you so much, can I forget/ you for eternity, and have no choice," with a rueful yes, there is no choice. The mysterious and "murderous dialectic" of growth and decay, the reticulations of self and other go on. These unsentimental poems isolate the news of our separate comings and goings and couplings, our thrashings inside the nets of our freedom until at last we fall silent:

> And here on this wavy earth, we, like the others,
> too thoughtful clods, may learn from those we walk on:
> Star-nosed moles, their catatonic tunnels
> and barrows . . . only in touch with what they touch;
> blind fur, in mourning, black from shying at limelight,
> not as we would, or the lowest serf—
> vegetating and protective creatures,
> forever falling short of our shortest life.
> Through my field glasses, I aggrandize
> a half-fledged robin with a speckled breast,
> big as a pheasant. . . . The invincible
> syllogism advances from talon to talon;
> no earthly ripple disturbs the ballbearing
> utility of the bald and nearest planet. . . .

Planet News,[2] Allen Ginsberg's collection of six years' poems, is a likable, ecumenical series by the ace reporter for the *Daily Planet.* Part Superman, part Clark Kent, and part Buddhist Jew, he walks in the city or trips through galaxies, opening "the portals to what Is," "my Hallelujah Way beyond all mortal/ inherited heavens." He is the fifth evangelist of the plenitude of Being. At ease in the global village with its electronic hardware, Pop Art icons, and T.V. lullabyes, he is "the eye in the center of the moving" world, taking down notes in Wichita, Benares, Wales, or Galilee, and like the satellites orbiting the skies, sending messages and pulses and pictures back to earth. The joint is jumping to the tune of the "End of History Rag!" but though he prefers the cosmos to the excremental State, and like

[2] PLANET NEWS, by *Allen Ginsberg.* City Lights. $2.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Blake sees angels and Nobodaddies, and messengers arrive with Annunciations from the invisible spheres, he does not go through strained gyrations to "feel godhead in me" or worship apocalypse, the fashionable pseudo-religion of our time. Essentially he is a Prospero poring over his sacred mystical books for the charms of white magic with which to overcome by exorcism such black magicians as the warlocks in the Pentagon, censors, and money lenders in the Temple who hold the masses of men in thrall to the Void. Ginsberg should not be mistaken as a psychedelic messiah *cum* salesman walking the earth and peddling the latest nostrums for transcendental vibrations. The alphabet of an enlarged consciousness he wishes to teach contains more than LSD: the symmetries between the visible and invisible spheres; the vastness of silence (a reproach to the babble of the Pepsi Generation); the beatitudes of body as well as of spirit; and above all, as he writes in "Wales Visitation," "Ecology,/ the wisdom of earthly relations,/ of mouths & eyes interknit ten centuries visible/ orchards of mind language manifest human,/ of the satanic thistle that raises its horned symmetry/ flowering above sister grass-daisies' pink tiny/ bloomlets angelic as lightbulbs."

What is engaging about *Planet News* is the personality of Allen Ginsberg. This King of May and guru presides ever a gentle saturnalia. He is believably "tranquil in his hairy body," his bawdry devotional and his homosexuality as casual and empathic as Whitman's. The poems have a friendly clutter and humor. For those who expect the howls (and howlers) of a Beat publicist for buggery and expanded consciousness, *Planet News* will prove surprising in its chaste and controlled lyricism. Ginsberg is more Ganymede than Jove. From a poet as erotically gregarious and "prophetic" as Ginsberg, one is prepared for a certain amount of the "Gasbag," and his long shaggy prose lines droop at times from all the cosmic weight they must bear. Still, in such poems as "Galilee Shore," "Describe: The Rain on Dasaswamedh," most of "Wichita Vortex Sutra," "City Midnight Junk Strains" (a fine elegy for Frank O'Hara), and in particular, "Wales Visitation," he may not "make Mantra of the American language," but he certainly makes "old human poesy."

Ezra Pound, the last survivor of the great generation of modernist poets, has issued some further *Drafts and Fragments of Cantos CX-CXVII*.[3] If they do not clarify and round off that strangest and knottiest of long poems—at this late date that would be futile to hope—they are not simply the exhuming of literary remains, additions to an antiquarian's collection of curiosities like Isaac D'Israeli's, or harangues on economics. Like some visionary architect still perfecting the grand plan of his life, Pound cannot let go of this petted child. Passages of private ruminations, ideograms, and references are as obscure as those

[3] DRAFTS & FRAGMENTS OF CANTOS CX-CXVII, by *Ezra Pound*. New Directions. $3.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a scrivener scratching mandarin lines on cuneiform, but the poems, fragmented as they may be, constitute an act of public contrition, a poetic last will and testament, that is very moving. The poet, for Pound, is the sun, "God's eye," and in old age he recalls his service to Artemis the goddess of beauty, and the times when "came Neptunus/ his mind *leaping*/ like dolphins,/ These concepts the human mind has attained./ To make Cosmos—/ To achieve the possible—". Like a Chekhovian character standing in his "ruined orchard," he admits his failure to enlarge the mind's space and let the "unstill" river of time flow through it, "to make gods out of beauty" in his encyclopedic poem:

> Can you enter the great acorn of light?
> But the beauty is not the madness
> Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me. . . .
> I cannot make it cohere.
> If love be not in the house there is nothing.

"A little light/ in great darkness," "like a rushlight/ to lead back to splendour": the plight of poetry in a barbaric age and Pound's pittance of comfort in understanding late that unless justice derives from magnanimity, men will be destroyers. There are phrases and lines in these cantos that in limpidity and color and stately music match the phrases of *A Lume Spento* and *Pavannes and Divisions.*

Young poets, like cub reporters, are looked upon with suspicion by their cynical elders: they must learn their craft the hard way, by trial and error and hard work, so the conventional wisdom goes; they are too intoxicated with words and their own emotions, and the current scene, which defines their advantage and limitations. Victor Hernandez Cruz, for example, a young Puerto Rican poet from East Harlem has just written his first book of poems, *Snaps,*[4] an inside report from El Barrio. His title is apt: the tenements, Latin music, cuchifritos, police, cocaine, early sexual experience are presented in a series of almost surly snapshots and barks and bites. There is no hoking up of emotions; instead, a terse knowing protest at the human waste around him. "What can you teach the man with walls?" he scornfully asks. The half-articulate intensity of his language is faithful to his somewhat jealously guarded personal and cultural identity; the lines tense with the secrets, argot, dangers, and camaraderies of the ghetto streets. A snapshot is revealing but a relatively limited vehicle. I hope Mr. Cruz opens himself more and risks more with his language. Meanwhile there are the pleasures of "spirits," "Advice to a Painter," "their poem," "Boston roller coaster," and "under me sometime, under me, walls & paint. 1967," which I quote: "when Jade came/ he felt the pressure/ &/ i did fist strokes/ toward him/ he said:/

[4] SNAPS, by *Victor Hernandez Cruz.* Random House (Vintage). $1.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where i is, man,/ i said:/ you uptown, son,/ feeling the breeze/ he opened his eyes/ & he said:/ under me something/ how do i stop this,/ stop what, motherfucker/ the walls/ colorful paints/ things/ big-breasted monkies/ white priests/ with pumpkin-faces/ talking books/ a pissing t.v. set/ strangers walking naked/ flying in the air/ a kissing horse/ a boat coming from that building/ &/ where am i anyway,/ he said,/ with eyes coming out/ hey hey/ take it easy, i said/ you're here in my house/ i'm vic, man/ i told you/ it was strong/ stuff."

Precocity of a different sort characterizes David Shapiro's second volume, *Poems from Deal*.[5] Something of an aesthete and an epigone of the New York poets, he has a trained sensibility and deft technique which express themselves in a dalliance with words and inconsequential wit that are French:

> Julie I want to gather your finely spun
> your white lips. You had my son in February
> back to my confused and situational room. That night
> it rained in Switzerland; the entire land bounced.
> I spoke to Uncle Louie of the Deal Bridge.
> He said I could pass like the dead, very merry.
> I want to rest your head.
> Now only delicious cinders can rest there.

Such mannered poetry floats in a solution of elegance and narcissism; it is too clever for its own good. The imagination, in its love of artifice for its own sake, is responsible to the colors and weights of words, but less so to their meanings. The poet's standpoint seems mainly that of previous art and his own fantasies. Shapiro's skill and the success of such poems as "The Idea of a University," "Elegy to Sports," and parts of "In Memory of Your Body" make one look forward to future volumes. Perhaps their polished surface needs to be broken by some dire news and a broadening of his sympathies.

In being reduced to a heavy, hard, metallic state, *Uranium Poems*,[6] by this year's Yale Younger Poet, Judith Johnson Sherwin, almost duplicate verbally the qualities of uranium. Since uranium is the radioactive element used in the making of atom bombs, Mrs. Sherwin has chosen it to represent the destructive element in man, "eager for evil, made for misrule." In the finest poem of the book, "to Whom it may concern," she petitions an anonymous "Lord" to defuse its explosive power:

> now, while you may,
> let this element die
>
> in us; mine

[5] POEMS FROM DEAL, by *David Shapiro*. E. P. Dutton. $4.50.
[6] URANIUM POEMS, by *Judith Johnson Sherwin*. Yale University Press. $1.65.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it from our minds,
delve
it out of ourselves
where it lies rare, heavy, greyish, in pitchblende
of our desires.
let man your self-reflecting universe
be made without uranium.

Her poems are peopled with prospectors who mine the earth for its precious ores but find death or dross instead. Gold-Rush fever, only now on a huge scale, grips America; in pursuit of a jackpot of coins, the landscape is despoiled, strewn with putrid, rotting things, like corpses of cars piled high by the road. Las Vegas is one symbol of this displaced sexual greed and diseased "geometries of the will."

Uranium Poems, however, are too narrowly imagined, missing that "radiant gist" in pitchblende which William Carlos Williams mentions in *Paterson* as the salient ingredient of poetry. In spite of rhythmic experiments, some affinities with Blues, and glints of American folkloric humor—Mike Fink is featured prominently—the poems resemble the unpleasant hoarse music of Wagner's smiths hammering at their forges in the *Ring:* a leaden, monotonous, greyish sound.

The leaflet has become a hallmark of "the half-dark 'sixties,' " a press release communicating instant news or rhetoric. As a political weapon it is not particularly persuasive since most people crumple and throw it away without reading it. In the title poem of her new book *Leaflets*[7] and elsewhere, Adrienne Rich tries to make her poems an effective political gesture and to live by Simone Weil's ethical precept: "The love of a fellow-creature in all its fullness consists simply in the ability to say to him: 'What are you going through?' " This ability seems lost in our world. The "Demon Lover" exacts his price: people "plod to the deathcars," our cities are "death-camps," revolutionaries like Che are cut down in their prime, and the "panicky lifecycle of my tribe" recapitulates itself, "spiritless with foreknown defeat." The old masters and sources are of little help, and one watches helplessly as those who risk their freedom for principle, like Natalya Gobanevskya, a Russian poet arrested for handing out leaflets in Red Square protesting the invasion of Czechoslovakia, are hauled off to jail. Conscience is half-alive in the depths. Unfortunately Mrs. Rich's verse seldom draws blood. "I wanted to choose words that even you/ would have to be changed by," she says, but the implosions do not take place—or only infrequently. Her language is disappointingly level and predictable. Only in the last section of Ghazals (a form of five or six independent couplets) does she write with a bitterness that makes her perceptions sting.

[7] LEAFLETS, by *Adrienne Rich*. W. W. Norton. $4.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although David Wagoner is a first-rate nature poet, describing the birds and wildlife of the Pacific Northwest with the meticulous craftsmanship of an Audubon and moving through its woods, streams, and bluffs with the reticent love of a Daniel Boone, he has much other advice (and a survival kit) to give us on ways to stay alive in the wilderness or circuit of our daily life we track. He is a poet of expanses, literally a poet with a view, who knows the proper place to stand and what to conserve and plant. His rambles outdoors start from and return to a solid house (a central metaphor in his poems for the mind) and he is self-reliant in emergencies because he has come "face to face with the problem of recognition" and "knows all about zero," having visited the bottom of his mind. There is no preening of the ego; Wagoner fits Whitman's definition of the poet as the equable man who is known by his "sanity and ensemble."

Wagoner's range of subject matter, command of mood, and inventiveness are impressive. He is fascinated by the heroic or unheroic shenanigans of burglars, shoplifters, bums, underdogs of all kind, and sleight-of-hand men (including poets). He memorializes the shooting of John Dillinger in a wry ballad cast in the form of questions and answers. The bizarre march of Coxey's Army, that late nineteenth-century tatterdemalion march of the unemployed and poor on Washington, is shrewdly patched out of the newspapers and slogans of the day—it is vintage Americana, broadsheet and historical editorial rolled in one: a newsreel that has stayed news. Love lyrics like "Water Music" are composed with a calm and unhurried civility, as are elegies, satires, anatomies of self, dialogues: each is married to its proper form. In "The Fruit of the Tree," a witty fantastic crossing of La Fontaine and a zoological study of the dromedary, the proportions and weights are beautifully distributed.

New and Selected Poems[8] shows the steady development of Wagoner's talent over the last decade. His draftsmanship is of a high order—no tricks, no fear of setting loose "the old words," nothing bloated or ragged—but he is more the poet of the whole poem than of quotable single lines. His poems suffer, if at all, from a slight excess of control: "Advice to the Orchestra," quite typically, elaborates a central image like a musical theme being traded from strings to brass to woodwinds and ending in a surprise tutti. The end of "The Apotheosis of the Garbagemen" will illustrate Wagoner's quiet radiance:

> As the skeletons of lampshades catch at the first light,
> They are going back to their empty trucks and singing
> To the dump, to the steaming rust
> In the rolling, hunch-backed, beckoning earth,
> The sea of decay where our foundering fathers

[8] NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, by *David Wagoner*. Indiana University Press. $1.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rubbled their lives
They have found the way
Back to God's plenty, to rags and riches,
But will come back to us with all we could wish for
In the darkness, singing love and wild appetite,
The good rats and roaches,
The beautiful hogs and billygoats dancing around them.

The Last Huzza belongs to Jonathan Williams, our best poet of serious tomfoolery. *An Ear in Bartram's Tree*[9] is a wildly exuberant sketch book of literary pranks, doodles, found objects, "a certain seediness," good-bad puns, riddling games and Southern nursery songs, sign boards, Blakean proverbs, and Mahler songs. Williams runs a one-man news clipping bureau. A brilliant compositor and almanac of wisdom, with an eye for the ridiculous and an ear for the songful, he puts things together with his companionable imagination. Obviously a man who loves books and the words and music of the American language, who knows the genus of plants but shuns the pedant's taxonomies: the taste of "wild ginger" is in his poems. With John Clare, he can say, "I found the poems in the fields/ And only wrote them down." Georgia is Beulah Land, the flowers of evil of a North Carolina mountain variety.

Several literary men must have jostled each other at Williams' birth to sponsor him, but Whitman, William Carlos Williams (no relation), and Charles Ives won out. Whitman's garrulous, breezy humor, carnal vitality, lack of snobbery, and faith in the homemade uncommon common sayings of democratic man are reproduced in Williams' light verse. The exception: for Williams the world is livelier and more sovereign than the self, which is why there are no traces of arch self-reference; he is too curious about people and too busy listening to their opinions and salty talk to fuss over his own sensibility. His version of William Carlos Williams' creed is 'Let the song lie in the thing!' there's/ music in anything! anything!" and "I attend my demotic, unliterary ear, which has got big eyes for this American place." *An Ear in Bartram's Tree* is thus a language experiment, the dialects of the American tribe. Finally, Ives's practice of mixing brash and bucolic strands of American noise into his serious symphonic structures serves as a third model: "Stand up and use your ears like a man!" was Ives's motto and Williams takes him at his word.

A brief anthology of Williams' tavern talk and madrigals and folk wit as coda:

[9] AN EAR IN BARTRAM'S TREE, by *Jonathan Williams*. University of North Carolina Press. $7.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1) "You rust out or/burn out."
2) "more mouth on/that woman/than ass/on a goose."
3) An Herpetological Epigram: "Two Ways to Seduce a Medusa: asp backwards; or, stoned."

THE DISTANCES TO THE FRIEND

Thoreau,
grabbing on, hard,
a red, raw
muskrat . . .
thought to eat it,
stifling all repulsion

so sat by the quagmire,
cranky, no cannibal, too
uninvolved
to get to man
so simply

we, the
heirs, hear other rustlings:

the grass stirs like an
androgyne,
the man
in our hearts stands
his fear
on its hand,
savagely—
inversed, nervelessly,
we sweat past each other,
unrelieved:

bitter landscapes,
unlovely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BERNARD BERGONZI

Black Cartesian

IT WAS WYNDHAM LEWIS who described Pound, Eliot, Joyce and himself as the "Men of 1914," thereby providing literary historians with a useful label, and emphasising the importance of Lewis' magazine *Blast,* which ran for two numbers in 1914 and 1915. As well as its copious contributions by Lewis and Pound, *Blast* provided the first British publication of Eliot's poems; and though Joyce was not a contributor, he was genially mentioned in the first issue. Fifty-five years later three of the Men of 1914 seem securely established, and much energy has been devoted to drawing, and redrawing, the maps of their achievement. Two of them, Joyce and Eliot, have attained not only greatness but academic respectability, and the shapeliness of their literary careers has been of great help to the exegetes: the path from *Dubliners* to the *Wake* may go dauntingly far, but it is clear and unbroken; whilst the way in which Eliot's poetry and prose support each other to form a complex but clearly defined totality is becoming more and more apparent. Pound is a harder case, certainly: between the historians, who are concerned with him as an influence and entrepreneur, and the cranks and ideologues who have turned him into a cult, the measure of Pound's strictly creative achievement remains problematical. Nevertheless, the *Cantos,* still in progress after more than fifty years, can be seen as a continuous development of some sort, even if it leads, at the end, into a blind alley. In contrast with these three, Lewis stands as the author of a vast, untidy *oeuvre* with no clear centre or pattern to it, and his reputation remains shadowy and unfocussed. Whereas the output of Joyce, Eliot and Pound, particularly when streamlined for pedagogic purposes, can be made to look like a river or at least a substantial stream, Lewis' work is like a broad, ill-defined delta, with many channels, some deep, others shallow, quite a number of stagnant pools, and a good deal of uninviting marsh. It was not enough for Lewis to be both a painter and a man of letters: as a writer he directed his overpowering energies into all the main literary forms; primarily fiction, but marginally also into verse and drama, as well as producing many books of literary and art criticism, and philosophical and political speculation. Lewis, in short, wrote too many books for his own good, and contemporary readers are still disinclined to do the basic work of sorting over the heap.

Now, however, they have Mr. Pritchard to help them: his short and unpretentious study does a remarkably useful job.[1] He knows

[1] WYNDHAM LEWIS, by *William H. Pritchard.* Twayne. $3.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lewis' work well, and he has a firm grasp on its context in twentieth-century English literature. Furthermore, he writes with admirable clarity and exactness, and is in the strict sense a critic, not just an explicator or exegete. That is to say, Mr. Pritchard is very insistent that some of Lewis' books are better than others, that a few of them are very bad, and that even in the good ones some bits may be better than other bits. At the beginning of his book he gets Lewis right by placing him in the company of the great Victorian sages like Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold; literary men who felt themselves entitled, indeed, called upon, to turn their critical attention to every kind of social or intellectual activity. At the same time, as John Holloway has shown, they did not proceed by advancing arguable propositions; rather, they tried to make the reader share their view of the world by the whole quality and movement of their writing, working emotionally and imaginatively rather than intellectually. They were, in short, literary artists even at their most argumentative and polemical. This is abundantly true of Lewis, who recalls them in many ways: he admired Ruskin and Arnold—*The Art of Being Ruled* is full of quotations from *Culture and Anarchy*—and his prose, in its singularity and vehemence, can be very reminiscent of Carlyle. During his intensely productive phase in the twenties Lewis did not make any deep distinction between fictional and non-fictional kinds of writing, since discursive works like *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man,* and novels like *The Childermass* and The *Apes of God,* were all intended to be fragments of one huge literary enterprise.

In his early, pre-1914 phase, Lewis was more purely an artist; *Blast,* for all its stridency of manner, was the vehicle of a dynamic formalism. (Despite Lewis' dislike of Marinetti, he seems to have been much more influenced by the futurists than is generally acknowledged; Apollinaire's manifesto, *L'Antitradition futuriste,* published in Milan in 1913 and reproduced in the *London Magazine* for November 1968, anticipates both the tone and the typographical peculiarities of *Blast.*) Lewis' earliest stories had been published by Ford Madox Ford in the *English Review* in 1909, although they were not collected until *The Wild Body* came out in 1927. These stories, and Lewis' first novel *Tarr,* most of which was written before the war, are sympathetically discussed by Mr. Pritchard. It is in this early fiction that Lewis first adopted the stance of what Walter Allen has called the Black Cartesian: mind and body are regarded as totally separate, the former being reluctantly imprisoned inside the absurd and inefficient mechanism of the latter. The dichotomy is exploited to savagely comic effect; the humour arises, in Bergsonian terms, from the organic being transformed into the mechanical. In this fiction Lewis is writing in a tradition that goes back to the Jonsonian comedy of humours, with Smollett and Dickens as later ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emplars; to convey his bleak view of the world Lewis evolved a very idiosyncratic prose style, which is intensely energetic and jerky, full of staccato rushes of substantives. The first version of *Tarr,* published in 1918, was intended by Lewis to be the literary equivalent of a cubist painting, and its fragmentary prose still reads very oddly: Lewis evidently considered that this experiment was not a success, and he later rewrote the book in rather more conventional terms. (Mr. Pritchard compares extracts from the two versions, showing the superiority of the later one.) Lewis' prose is well adapted to his way of looking at the world, but it does, I think, possess an accumulative monotony; its intensity is too exclusive, too lacking in modulation or nuance. And this is not merely a stylistic defect but is essential to Lewis' vision. We all have moods, no doubt, of seeing humanity as absurd and pointlessly animated puppets, but Lewis in all his fiction up to *The Revenge for Love* never lets us see them as anything else. It may be that the naturalistic bias of prose fiction is too strong to sustain this exclusively two-dimensional vision, which may require a medium as stylized as the stage comedy of Jonson. Mr. Pritchard, to be sure, is aware of this limitation, but he wants to deal with it by jettisoning Lewis' fiction of the twenties, *The Childermass* and *The Apes of God.* I am quite happy to abandon *The Childermass;* although it contains some magnificent writing, particularly at the beginning, a great deal of it consists of not very intelligible argument and localized satire, the kind of thing that Lewis did a great deal better in wholly discursive terms in *Time and Western Man.* On the other hand, I think I would rather keep *The Apes of God* than *Tarr* or *The Wild Body,* since it aims to be pure satire and nothing else and one is less troubled by a sense of willed limitation. It is, of course, far too long and utterly intolerable to read right through more than once: nevertheless, it contains some of Lewis' most brilliant prose and is well worth preserving as an anthology of bravura satirical passages.

With *The Revenge for Love* in 1937 Lewis revealed that he could write a genuine, even moving novel: the apparatus of puppet-fiction was not dismantled, but the puppets showed an unexpected capacity to suffer, just as they do in such roughly contemporary novels as Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* and Nathanael West's *Miss Lonelyhearts.* Mr. Pritchard writes very perceptively about the qualities of this fine novel, and Lewis' later ones, like *The Vulgar Streak* and *Self Condemned.* The last of these, incidentally, takes the same sort of place in Lewis' development as the *Pisan Cantos* in Pound's: in both works a lifelong dedication to objectivity and impersonality is cracked open by the intensity of personal suffering. Mr. Pritchard interestingly compares Lewis' relation to his hero, René Harding, with Lawrence's to Birkin in *Women in Love.* However opposed Lewis and Lawrence may have been, the one staking everything on the intellect and the visible world, the other crusading for feeling and the dark

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gods, they had quite a lot in common. Both were lonely, individualistic prophets, passionately convinced that the world was out of joint and that they were called on in their writing to set it right; both were equally at odds with the values and personalities of the English literary establishment.

Mr. Pritchard, whose manifest common sense sometimes declines into timidity, writes best about Lewis as a novelist and next best about him as a literary critic, in which role Lewis could be very good indeed. The few pages on Pound in *Time and Western Man* still seem to me quite seminal, and the criticism of Joyce in the same book, though less penetrating, is still important, as Mr. Pritchard shows (a pity, though, that he didn't refer to Joyce's comeback in *Finnegans Wake,* where Lewis is mocked as the author of *Spice and West-End Woman*). So, too, are the chapters on Faulkner, Hemingway and Eliot in *Men Without Art.* Prudently, Mr. Pritchard doesn't try to relate Lewis the painter to Lewis the writer, though I wish he had tried. After all, the principal motif in *Time and Western Man* is Lewis' insistence on the superiority of the eye over the ear (and, by extension, of art over music, and space over time): the whole book is pervaded by Lewis' presentation of himself as, like Gautier, *un homme pour qui le monde extérieur existe.* Mr. Pritchard recognises the brilliance of *Time and Western Man,* though he doesn't seem sure how to do it justice. It is here, rather than in the arid and rambling *Art of Being Ruled,* that Lewis may claim to have done for the nineteen-twenties what Arnold did for the eighteen-sixties in *Culture and Anarchy.* Lewis' targets may have lost their potency, just as Arnold's have: philosophically no-one worries much about Whitehead or Alexander or even Bergson any more, and if Pound and Joyce are still live fish, Gertrude Stein isn't. And the book amply displays Lewis' faults of method: the arguments that lead nowhere, the portentous connections that don't connect, and, above all, the repetitiveness that makes him go on asserting for paragraph after paragraph, even chapter after chapter, what he has already made abundantly clear. But for all that, it remains, like *Culture and Anarchy,* a superbly entertaining book, where one is constantly diverted by the spectacle of a prodigiously well stocked mind in action, lashing its victims one after another in full enjoyment of its own exuberance.

Again, although Mr. Pritchard is clearly right to dismiss the ephemeral political works that reflected Lewis' brief flirtation with fascism in the thirties, I feel he should have dwelt more fully on the works of cultural criticism that followed *Time and Western Man,* such as *The Diabolical Principle, Paleface* and *The Doom of Youth.* Uneven though they are, and in some respects objectionable to liberal feelings, they remain admirably vigorous examples of how not to be taken in by fashionable manifestations in either minority or mass culture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In his later years Lewis was friendly with McLuhan and one sees the influence of his critical spirit in *The Mechanical Bride,* though hardly, I think, in *Understanding Media.* This spirit is sadly lacking in our own confused and pretentious cultural scene, and we have need of a latter-day Lewis with equivalent courage and energy and polemical zeal; one would like to read him on, for instance, Bob Dylan or Susan Sontag or Andy Warhol. Since Lewis wrote *The Doom of Youth* the youth cult has swollen immeasurably throughout the western world, and is badly in need of fresh puncturing.

If, as I have implied, Mr. Pritchard is not a flawless critic of Lewis, he is still a very good one: his coolness is to be preferred to the spirit of resentful special pleading that has characterised Lewis' disciples in the past. Most important, he is aware of, though I don't think he sufficiently stresses, the paradox that lay at the heart of Lewis' literary personality. Although a scarifier of romantic pretensions and sensationalism, Lewis' own stance as an isolated and heroic artist—"the lonely old volcano" in Auden's phrase—who is persecuted but undefeated, is essentially a late-romantic attitude. And although Lewis may have wished to write like Arnold, he was always an individual crusader, who could not appeal, as Arnold did, to a community of educated opinion to support his criticisms. Lewis' aesthetics placed a high value on the deadness and immobility of art as against the untidy flux of life, and in general he preferred contemplation to action; yet everything that he wrote is pervaded by his own restless and often violent energy: all too evidently his own taste was for polemic rather than contemplation. Mr. Pritchard sums it up very well:

> But the strange, almost paradoxical, doubleness of response that had always characterised Lewis' obsessive dealings with matters of the self and the will persists: on the one hand, there is a condemnation of action and the self-willed "actor"—Vincent Penhale for example; on the other a fascinated admiration for such energy and a recognition at least implicitly, that he, Lewis, possessed it himself.

If Lewis is to remain important as a literary artist, then I think he will have to be understood in terms of this paradox; just as, with Eliot, the doctrine of impersonality now seems to have concealed a great intensity of personal suffering. The essential Lewis is likely to be confined to a fairly small number of books from his large output; the pruning operation that Mr. Pritchard has carried out, severe though it may seem to Lewis' admirers, is surely essential if he is to survive.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VERNON YOUNG

Socialist Camp: A Style of Radical Wistfulness

IN THAT IDEAL REPUBLIC which is invoked by anyone who writes a criticism of life, Susan Sontag would have no status, since her mind is nourished solely on products of decomposition. Her opportunity depends absolutely on there being a condition of latent anarchy to sanction the impudence with which she defines the condition as admirable. She is a natural for periods of breakup, when manifestoes are as common as tea leaves and are as often consulted by the hopeful, when novelty is the supreme criterion, when artists sell their depleted expression as a new mode of perception (or as the ultimate vision), when housewrecking is the most honoured of the manual occupations, when the plebeian mind reigns over all and believes that politics, if not sex, will repair its incapacity for enjoying what it has inherited. Miss Sontag has many of the secondary attributes of a professional revolutionary: an irreparable want of humor, a sweeping disregard of the nuances of history, a hatred of elites over which she does not personally preside, a faculty for translating all data into propaganda—and underneath it all, barely concealed, a private thirst to be devoured by something bigger, more forceful and simpler than herself: in her case, an Apocalypse which would nullify forever her compulsive quarrel with the Word.

From first to last, in this collection of essays,[1] she is preoccupied with the familiar sequence of modern agony: the problematic nature of art; the burden of language and the urge to "destroy" it; the elimination of the subject, the object, the image; silence and "self-transcendence" as the ultimate other-worldly gesture of the artist. Every essay is a *ruse de guerre,* an ordering of her little circle of friends, a strenuously argued attempt to hold an untenable position. Always one senses that the proposition going forward is what Freud called a memory screen: the real battle is going on somewhere else and the arrangements she has chosen are provisional, designed to consolidate her foothold of the hour: the autonomy of the pornographic imagination; *Persona* as a masterpiece; Jean-Luc Godard as a master; the depravity of American capitalism and "the duplicity of language." And always there is the recurring motif of *revolution* which, in her handling of it, seems more often than not to be wistfully Dionysian, rather than post-Marxian.

[1] STYLES OF RADICAL WILL, by *Susan Sontag.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The secondary attributes of a revolutionary, I said above, but not the primary one; she has no passion, only resentment, which may well be a major source of her anxiety. Her convictions have been inhibited by too many academic reservations, by the milieux in which she has, I gather, been conditioned (Southern California and the Parisian Left), by the frigidity of her sympathies (her mind seems to cherish no content of affection or rooted memory) and by the temptations of Madison Avenue. (It is hard to maintain a nostalgia for the abyss or to remain a sleeping Trotskyite when you're *chic*-photographed by *Vogue!*). Her typical mode of discourse is neither altruistic nor inflamed; solipsistic, rather. Her aesthetic principles are up-to-date and bleak—like Swedish Modern. "Ideally, one should be able to pay attention to everything" is her least persuasive pose if, therewith, she hopes to convince us that she contains multitudes. Her repeated effort to impose herself as an apostle of the multiple point of view scarcely attains the stature of a deception, for she is rarely able to pay attention to an alternative point of view of any subject she takes up. Her preferences and her method are alike *exclusive;* her strategy is that of the post-graduate seminar: from the matter at hand eliminate all normative, "moral" considerations and concentrate on its linguistic and structural components. (For her analysis of Bergman's *Persona,* this is effective, beyond any suspicions we may have that she is softening us up for her own adaptation of the Bergman (cum-Godard) method in her film, *Duet for Cannibals.*)

Actually, her concern with multiplicity comes down to this: she wants others to extend *their* latitude in order to embrace the tiny sector of experience to which she is confined—I might say by which she is obsessed. Ideally, you should be able to pay attention to *her.* And in due course her formula becomes: "Ideally it should be possible for everyone to have a sexual connection with everyone else." The equivocation in this proposal, shocking enough out of context, is obvious when what precedes it is quoted, her view of the pornographic imagination (expressed in art) as a *total* universe. She means it is a *reductive* universe and there is no question that she admires the corporate economy of it, the attractive isolation of its self-perpetuating activity.

> It has the power to ingest and metamorphose and translate all concerns that are fed into it, reducing everything into the one negotiable currency of the erotic imperative. All action is conceived of as a set of sexual exchanges. Thus, the reason why pornography refuses to make distinctions between the sexes or allow any kind of sexual preference or sexual taboo to endure can be explained "structurally." The bisexuality, the disregard for the incest taboo, and other similar features common to pornographic narratives function to multiply the possibilities of exchange. Ideally. . . . [*da capo*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is also no question that while ostensibly she is casting a cold non-partisan eye on the "structural" limits of pornographic expression she is pointedly urging us to re-transpose the attitudes of sub-art (my term, not hers) into life attitudes. From that vantage, it's an incredible statement, for the *nature* of the "exchanges" postulated here would block more possibilities than it would multiply: it goes dead against the wisdom of the race. She ratifies her implications beyond a doubt in several other passages, with comparable euphemism, notably in "Trip to Hanoi" where, following a rueful contrast of Vietnamese sexual "puritanism" with Castro liberalism (I must say his *name* isn't altogether reassuring!), she refers to herself as "a Western neo-radical . . . for whom revolution means not only creating political and economic justice but releasing and validating personal (as well as social) energies of all kinds, including erotic ones." Why should one need a revolution to release *or* validate one's erotic energy? What does she precisely mean—validate? To make valid, to legitimize—*to approve*? American society today doesn't validate erotic energy? Or does she mean the literary and cinematic reproduction of it—is this the real stick in the faggot? (Ask Grove Press how their business is!) If what we have here is the same old sad sick dream of the Bohemian Left—that under Communism of one sort or another impartialities of the sexual adventure will be endorsed by the State—it's high time they reversed their expectations. I fail to see how the sexual mores can break down more speedily than they have been doing under capitalism.

That Miss Sontag's essay on Godard is, excepting "Trip to Hanoi," the longest in the book, does not surprise me. Artists for whom "the problem of language" is paramount seem to demand an ocean of language on which to float them. I recommend her apologia for anyone who needs a summary of the pro-Godard arguments which have been appearing at regular intervals for the last ten years. She documents, with more copious detail than I would have the patience to assemble, my principal reasons for detesting Godard. There is no meeting-place for those who don't like Godard and those who do. Recently, in the pages of this Review, Mr. François Bondy nailed as "an irritating, even boring, feature" of Godard's movies, his "craze for quotes as a replacement for the thought process." Miss Sontag has a short way with such dissenters: "to cavil at Godard for the talkiness of his films is to misunderstand his materials and his intentions." If we contend that given his materials and his intentions we find him nonetheless boring, and that furthermore there might be a link here with the bisexual content of much modern art she asks us to accept (to understand its materials and intentions is *not* synonymous with enjoying it!), we shall provoke the sort of bitter-sweet reaction with which she greeted an essay by Leslie Fiedler, not to her liking: "remarkably wrong-headed and interesting." (She always leaves a tip; she might need to be back in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that town some day.) In any case, she is unarguably convinced that the Godard cinema is anything she says it is.

> . . . for him, the fact that movies, which purport to be a pictorial medium, admit of language, precisely gives cinema its superior range and freedom compared with other art forms. . . .
>
> At this moment in Godard's work, the problem of language appears to have become his leading motif. Behind their obtrusive verbosity, Godard's films are haunted by the duplicity and banality of language. Insofar as there is a "voice" speaking in all his films, it is one that questions all voices.

Is it possible for "superior range and freedom" to be conferred on cinema by another medium which is characterized by duplicity and banality? (The Irreconcilable is a *frisson* in Miss Sontag's world.) If Godard questions all voices, the simplest answer for him would be to turn them all off; no doubt he will arrive at that impasse—and it can't be too soon for me. . . . It occurs to me that there are three kinds of creators "haunted by the duplicity of language": those who have no gift for language to begin with; those who have a genius for it and are forever frustrated by its disparity with the Platonic conception they have formed; and those for whom the use of language is a surrogate for some other longing which language fails to express and can never assuage. Miss Sontag belongs to the latter category, which lends a certain pathos to her passing interpretation of Bergman's *Persona:* "the person who places uncritical faith in words is brought down from relative composure and self-confidence to hysterical anguish."

Quite the most misguided contribution among the essays collected in this volume is her anomalous preface to E. M. Cioran's *The Temptation to Exist* (1956), written for the English edition published by Quadrangle Books in 1968. No doubt attracted initially by Cioran's elegant and sardonic notes on the modern artist's advance into a purified realm where the mind, freed of associations, "plies its own vacuity," Miss Sontag agreed to introduce Cioran to American readers. (Heretofore, he was known here only by the selections which had appeared in THE HUDSON REVIEW.) "Almost all our discoveries are due to our violences, to the exacerbation of our instability." In this vein as well, Cioran must have deceived Miss Sontag into believing that he was securely identifiable with the dilemmas he was posing. To her disappointment, she discovered that he could not be drafted as an advocate for her cause.[2] Unlike her, he suavely insists on recognizing the absurdity of his position. In fact, more than any writer I know today,

[2] I am *assuming* the sequence of disillusion I describe here; if she had foreknowledge of his views before coming to the Quadrangle job, then her Introduction is purely a kiss of death.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saving perhaps W. H. Auden, he is almost wholly quotable *against* Susan Sontag:

> The manipulation of anxiety, not in order to convert absence into mystery but mystery into absence. . . . More than one contemporary novelist reminds me of a mystic who has *transcended* God. Having reached this point—that is, nowhere—the mystic can no longer pray, since he has passed beyond the object of his prayers. . . .

Moreover, Cioran believes that in our time "rebellion enjoys an undue privilege" and—horrors!—he is, as she manages to recognize, an aristocrat of the spirit. Now, we all know that an *aristo* is the natural enemy of a Jacobin. Yet perhaps the real source of the discomfiture which leads her first into deprecation and eventually into rejection of him is his psychograph on the Jews, "A People of Solitaries," to my sense a brilliant performance, to Miss Sontag's, "surprisingly cursory and high-handed." I cannot imagine that Hannah Arendt, for instance, or Isaac Bashevis Singer would find anything in this essay to view with alarm. I suspect they would experience a sad shock of recognition, as having knows its content all along. But to the new *déraciné,* while an Englishman, a Frenchman or a Patagonian is fair game, if you touch the Jewish subject with even a shadow of irony—you've had it! Whatever the case, this Introduction is something new in publishing ventures: an author launched by someone who is conspicuously out of sympathy with him! For Cioran, the end of Europe is a tragedy, for Miss Sontag it's a relief; for Cioran, the breakdown of language is a scandal, to be salvaged by irony; for Miss Sontag, it's a program. She labors to fulfill her obligation but steadily she takes from Cioran more than she awards him, whittling him down with arch insinuations, until finally, surrendering all pretense of trying to accommodate him, she turns to her real culture-hero, whom she'd have been happier to promote at the outset—John Cage!

> In contrast to Cioran's unrelenting elitism, Cage envisages a totally democratic world of the spirit, a world of "natural activity" in which "it is understood that everything is clean: there is no dirt." In contrast to Cioran's baroque standards of good and bad taste in intellectual and moral matters, Cage maintains there is no such thing as good or bad taste. . . .

(Note the deflationary use of *baroque.* How very Swedish!).

At such moments, she recalls, if not a beardless Whitman, one of those anti-Talmud dissidents like Jakob Frank, leader of an eighteenth-century cult for whom everything, including evil, was to become sacred. Through sinning there would emerge a world without sin, and sexual excess was an imperative. Frank, himself, announced: "I have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come to rid the world of all the laws and statutes which have been in existence hitherto."[3]

"Trip to Hanoi" chronicles the fall of valor. Her subject: not What is Happening in Vietnam but What is Happening in Susan Sontag. No blinding conversion, evidently; on the other hand, few amendments to her obtuse but strained partisanship: her visit is an extended exercise in ideological temperature-taking. She is constantly dismayed, like a sophomore, at the vacillations of her spirit under fire. Disoriented by harrowing transitions in space and time, she is understandably confused by almost everything: by the cloudbanks of a foreign tongue, by her social helplessness (led by the nose like a child or a tourist), by the official clichés which do duty as information or ideology (in *any* country, East or West, of course), by the monotonous forms of Asiatic civility, by the dispassionate intensity of a people long habituated to daily siege, by her naive discovery that there *are* "classical" values and that there *is* a "history for use—for survival," by the omnipresence of bananas, by her own nostalgia for "the multiplicity of Western experience" and homey talk about San Francisco rock groups and *The New York Review of Books:* by the circles that she finds in the windmills of her mind.

Understandably confused. But not sufficiently to enlarge her rudimentary political doctrine or to dispense with the simplistic Commy slogans she finds herself accepting in lieu of any more plausible; insufficiently to restrain herself from quoting those God-awful gems of Ho Chi Minh, such as "There are no bad people; there are only bad governments."[4] Not the least unbelievable feature of her account is that nowhere does she in so many substantial words recognize that *the North Vietnamese were fighting the South Vietnamese.* There was only *North* Vietnam, a peace-loving but embattled little country fighting off an imperialist aggressor. She swallowed whole the verdict of that rigged Stockholm tribunal and the official line of Ho Chi Minh which every uninformed liberal seems to have accepted since 1965. What took place in 1954 she never broaches. I can understand why, since this *is* a complex question; all the same, when legality, moral outrage and U. S. bombing tactics have been enlisted to condemn the duration of the war, it is pertinent to remember that it was Ho Chi Minh who chose to resume hostilities in order to impose Communism on the South and that the South pleaded for American assistance. The tragedy is that the U. S. effort has destroyed almost more than it has conserved and that the government of the South appears to be as per-

[3] See *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* by David Bakan. (D. Van Nostrand, 1958). It is interesting to learn that Frank and his followers wound up as converts to Roman Catholicism, and to note in the same breath that *transcend, purge* and *redeem* are prominent in Miss Sontag's vocabulary.

[4] This is the variant she uses in her film. A pastime for rainy afternoons is suggested; any number can play. Sample: "There are no second-rate people; there are only second-class hotels."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ennially corrupt as that of the North is abidingly ruthless. Not a qualifying word on this aspect from Miss Sontag; in her eye (she couldn't have used both) the North Vietnamese are altogether innocent, noble and altruistic (those she met may have been), doing no more than defend their homeland against a colossus seeking to crush them (for no reason except Imperialism with which she ever comes to grips) while hopefully preparing the *peaceful reconciliation* of the peninsula. Never a hint of the 50,000 village headmen murdered in the Collective preparation of 1954; of prostitutes who had their breasts cut off for fraternizing with the French; of 1200 Laotian tribesmen, women and children among them, battered to death with clubs and guns (this is a mere incident in the history of Viet Cong atrocities).

Her gullibility is often comical. I resist—against my susceptibility to the exotic anecdote—her straight-faced retailing of the restoration of North Vietnamese prostitutes to a condition of primal innocence. "Fairy tales were read to them; they were taught childrens' games and sent out to play." There is also room for reasonable doubt of her amazed, and I don't think very approving, impression that men and women worked, fought and slept together "without raising any issue of sexual temptation." How does she *know* there wasn't, for certain? I'm skeptical because her inference is not verified by Robert Shaplen's amusing observation on the thousands of cadre-women utilized by the Viet Cong in their Underground Village Committees throughout South Vietnam. "While women are hard workers, the Communists acknowledge that 'they are credulous and cannot resist love'; they need 'special indoctrination on revolutionary concepts toward sex relations.' "[5] Be that as it may, Little Miss Muffet was otherwise seriously upset by the spider of empiricism which, in North Vietnam, sat down beside her. At one perilous moment, she abandons herself completely to the duplicity and banality of language, with no semantic provision for escape.

> If some of what I've written evokes the very cliché of the Western left-wing intellectual idealizing an agrarian revolution that I was so set on not being, I must reply that a cliché is a cliché, truth is truth, and direct experience is—well—something one repudiates at one's peril.

[5] "Letter From South Vietnam," in *The New Yorker* (April 12, 1969). Since the war may be "over" by the time this review is in print, I think it is worth noting that Robert Shaplen, who has been raising reportage to the dignity of history with his Southeast Asia reports, has this to say of the aftermath. "The ultimate political struggle in Vietnam that will follow whatever settlement is worked out may go on for years. It could produce a fresh outbreak of hostilities, including a new Communist-led guerilla war, a resurgence of military rule, or a true nationalist rebellion opposing both the Communists and whatever Saigon government is in power. It could, finally, even produce peace." Ideally, one should be able to pay attention to a diversity of political consequences.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A temporary convulsion. If the brunt of reality had intruded as painfully as she would have us believe, then, upon returning to the West (i.e. Sweden, the ultimate boneyard towards which she has long been travelling) she would have torn up the scenario of that film she had prepared as being, from the point of view of life, an affront to the spirit of authentic suffering. Faced with acknowledging the irreconcilable or maintaining her previous profile, she chose the profile. (Cf. Cioran. ". . . except for a couple of criminals, everyone aspires to have a public soul, a poster soul.") The film, *Duet for Cannibals:* its only interest for me here is as a postscript and as a parenthesis among her styles of radical wilfulness. If I had been shown this movie with no credits attached and asked to guess who made it I would have opined that it was the work of a Swedish Film School student who would have liked terribly to be an exquisite French invert but has remained, alas, gracelessly Swedish. Who, among Tomas, Sigrid, Bauer and Francesca, is going to get between the sheets of whom has never been my idea of an exalted subject for a film narrative. To be sure, by reference to *Persona,* Miss Sontag has already warned the knowing that in this kind of film-making it would be banal or "pejorative" (one of her favorites) to suppose that what meets the eye has anything much to do with the real subject. To Miss Sontag's admirers I leave the task of distinguishing between manifest and latent content. I have been fatally conditioned to the notion that before you mount boldly into allegory you must, in a movie, have *something* that meets the eye from which to take your point of departure. What I visibly note in *Duet for Cannibals* is a total absence of *life,* of any personality in whom, provisionally, I can place my confidence or my interest, of any milieu from which values might be expected to emerge, of any problem that quickens my sympathy—and with no compensation, for all this deadness, by any feeling whatever of the film medium. If, like Mr. Fiedler, I am being remarkably wrong-headed (if interesting?) I can only reply, as someone seems already to have said:

> a cliché is a cliché, truth is truth, and direct experience is—well—something one repudiates at one's peril.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROGER SALE

The Art of Hugh Kenner

The Counterfeiters WAS PUBLISHED almost two years ago, and has been received rather as all Hugh Kenner's books have been, with silence punctuated by an occasional burst of respectful incomprehension.[1] It is a delightful book, and has in it more exciting sentences than anything Kenner or anyone else has written for years, yet it stands even less chance than Kenner's earlier ones had of gaining decent recognition because it is hard to say what it is about. Kenner himself is perhaps a little too pleased with its multiplicity of "subjects" and begins with a list of them that smacks of the undergraduate joke: "Buster Keaton (stoic comedian); bad poetry; Albrecht Dürer; Joyce; Swift, Pope; closed systems, mathematical and mechanical; Charles Babbage and his Calculating Engines; the late history of Latin abstract nouns; Andy Warhol; Gödel's Proof; horses, computers, games; a clockwork duck that suffered from indigestion; and a man who wore a gas mask to ride his bicycle." That is admittedly daunting, but in itself is far from an adequate explanation of the book's shabby reception. More plausible, one feels after sampling published commentary on Kenner, is the never very clearly conceived notion that the man's politics are very Right—he was poetry editor of the *National Review* and he writes apparently approving pieces on the likes of Governor Reagan.

In most circles, however, a man's politics do not in themselves condemn him. Kenner's master, Eliot, was also of the Right, but his classicism, Catholicism, and royalism have always been treated with no less than respect and disbelief; Leavis is also a Tory (if any label will do), yet no one has ever attacked him for *that*. One no more hears attacks on, say, Cleanth Brooks for his politics than one hears slurs on Father Ong for his religion. But there is something about Kenner's manner that sets people off, and because with him the politics and the style are integral, casual observers easily mistake their dislike of one for their unease with the other. Kenner has set himself as his central task the recasting of Eliot's central insights, but because he is doing this fifty years after "Tradition and the Individual Talent," at a time when many others seem trying to pretend Eliot never existed, and in a place six thousand miles from London, Kenner has evolved a style which must risk the charge of complacency in order to avoid the pompousness and the self-pity that usually characterize the Eliotic. The attempt to regain the insights and the past they imply must not tempt one into any displacement from the present. The style, then, is cool, breezy, witty, free of academic jargon, relaxed but cap-

[1] THE COUNTERFEITERS, by *Hugh Kenner*. Indiana University Press. $5.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able of great precision, and above all, knowing. Kenner acts as though there were nothing he could not make part of his subject, nothing he could not transform with his style, and people don't like that.

Before *The Counterfeiters* Kenner devoted most of his energy to the great Tory moderns, though his three textbooks make clear how widely he can range. Kenner deals with the momentous events of 1910-1940 as though they were simultaneously ancient history—and thus capable of being treated with unimpassioned rightness—and happening yesterday—and so affording intimate glimpses of these writers at work. He does little with biographical material as such; he works, rather, with the public self or selves, the circumstances of publication or the format of a work, always implying that his favorites are as knowing, confident, and careful as he is himself. Anything about them about which he cannot speak with perfect assurance he simply does not mention. Perhaps if others were as intelligent, sensible, and subtle with these authors as Kenner, others who were also more inward or personal with them, then we might say that Kenner's method is merely flashy. But such others do not exist. Most Joyceans, for instance, try to overlook Wyndham Lewis' complaint about Joyce's style that it is all cliché, and thereby leave themselves defenseless against the charge of the unbeliever that Joyce is a mean-spirited wordbag. So Kenner opens up Joyce and says: look at all those clichés, how flat and flaccid the writing is, how ironic, how detached, how exquisitely comic. No wonder Kenner sets people's teeth on edge—he acts as though he were trying to put everyone else out of business.

The Counterfeiters has some passages about Joyce, Pound, and Eliot, as well as some wonderful ones about their contemporary, Buster Keaton, but mostly it is about "an astonishing half-century, 1690-1740," and it is unlikely that the caretakers of Augustan literature are going to be any happier about this book than the specialists in modern literature have been about the others. They cannot complain, however, that Kenner does not know enough or that he ignores "the eighteenth-century point of view." He does speak, however, for all his careful foonotes and acknowledgments to earlier writers on the period, as though he were the first to examine this material: "Appearance, appearance: and the world is perhaps a congeries of appearances, imperfectly observed? (David Hume was to think so)." The repetition, the colon, the word "congeries," the rhetorical question, the aside about Hume—this is not R. S. Crane or Irwin Ehrenpreis—it is all gesture, designed both to place us "back then" and to insist that we are not then, but now:

> Observe one appearance with care, and record the observation: you have a Fact. A dog with eighteen ounces of water pumped into its thorax grew short-winded. Record another: a dog injected with opium, brandy, and water, died. Another: a die swallowed by a dog was excreted after twenty-four hours, its weight halved but its shape and spots retained.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Within a few sentences we are in a typical Kenneresque limbo. The writing is whimsical, yet clear, intent, effortless, obscure in its direction:

> All these were noted at the Dublin Philosophical Society in the 1680's, when Swift was an undergraduate. Do they help us know what a dog is? A dog is perhaps partially defined as that animal which is inconvenienced in one way by water in the thorax, but in another way by brandy in the jugular, and has the power of halving the bulk of dice. Or granted that these conditions are insufficient to specify dogginess, what conditions are? Is there such a thing as dogness, as a dog, or do we merely triangulate shifting points? Dogness, horseness, manness: *caninitas, equinitas, humanitas*: such terms, denoting stable essences, men in the seventeenth century were learning increasingly to view with suspicion as being part of the empty terminology of the schools.

We have heard about "the influence of the Royal Society," but not in this way. Kenner is more interested in the investigations themselves than the writers of textbooks usually are, yet the detached, Cheshire-cattish air implies some larger purpose. By 1738, we learn, Jacques de Vaucanson "has exhibited in Paris a mechanical duck which could waddle and splash, beat the air with detailed feathered wings, wag its head, quack, pick up grain, ingest this with swallowing movements, and eventually excrete the residue." Did Vaucanson make a duck? No, a counterfeit. Deny duckness, though, and the question arises as to how we can tell a "real" duck from Vaucanson's.

Kenner here makes a typical leap, Nijinsky-like in its casual implication that he is doing nothing more than developing the argument along obvious lines. If a duck has not essence and can be imitated by a machine, what happens to ancient authors:

> For grant the principle on which counterfeiting rests, that a man is knowable only in his behavior, and, when he is dead or otherwise out of sight, only in the traces his behavior has left; grant that, and the authority of the Ancients, doughty men whom we had been accustomed to treating (Tully, Maro) with the familiarity we accord living eminences, dwindles to a problem in the evidential consistency of scraps of paper. . . . Our civilization is nourished by a strong vein of wisdom running from remote antiquity. And the comfort of contemplating this *vis perennis* Bentley destroyed, by asserting that nothing of Aesop's was extant and that Phalaris' letters were a manifest hoax: for he mentions towns which were not built, and quotes books which had not been written, and uses a dialect unknown until five centuries after he died. Being flayed, Phalaris' person is altered greatly for the worse. . . . In an age which looked to antiquity not for books but for men, Bentley was asking inconvenient questions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bentley did with Phalaris what Vaucanson did with his duck, he stuck to appearances, The Evidence, facts. Homer and Milton, in Bentley's version, waddle, splash, quack, and pick up grain: "Hence (Alexander Pope foresaw) a long twilight, a vertigo of classicism into fuddyduddy chaos and lexicographic catatonia:

> How parts relate to parts, or they to whole,
> The body's harmony, the beaming Soul,
> Are things which Kuster, Burman, Wasse shall see,
> When Man's whole frame is obvious to a *Flea*."

The movement from dog to duck to Bentley to Pope is completely fluid, as though anyone who could see the eighteenth century clearly would see how closely related are various things which we, in our specialized ignorance, have allowed to become disparate. Pope was and is scorned for qualities rather like Kenner's and for his insistence that the dunces indeed sought to make man's whole frame obvious to a flea. Pope too was "reactionary," "presumptuous," either wicked and obscure or else obvious and repetitious, because he knew that the then new (but now triumphant) scholarship and new empiricism were killing any idea of being human that could not be counterfeited.

This Pope, however, is partial because ideological and partisan, so Kenner offers another perspective in order to make him funnier, more literary. If animals and ancient authors can be counterfeited, so too can poets, as witnessed by *The Stuffed Owl*, the anthology of bad verse edited by D. B. Wyndham Lewis and Charles Lee. These editors start with Cowley but don't really know why: "To read their preface is like watching Galileo fail to discover gravitation." Kenner-Newton then goes to work on an absurd ode of Cowley's which Lewis and Lee had put early in their anthology without seeing that Cowley's way of being bad was "a wholly new way for poetry to fail, so that failure becomes a kind of positive quality." The poem is about Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, and has lines like "But Harvey, our Apollo, stopt not so./Into the bark and root after her did go." Kenner says: "This is what comes of the Restoration emphasis on clarity; it leaves nothing whatever for the poet to do but strike a bardic posture and elevate his language." Before Cowley bad poetry had been simply boring or incompetent, but beginning with him poetry, under the pressure to be clear and reasonable, also becomes capable of being perfectly silly: "Spade! with which Wilkinson hath tilled his lands." "Observe that when you are perpetually diagramming the reasonableness of what you are doing, it is open to any reader who has not fallen under the spell to wonder why you should be doing it at all."

Under such circumstances the difference between a good and a bad poem is not that one is written better or employs different techniques, and first Dryden and then Pope had to find ways to be serious without being laughably bad: "The price of poetry, [Pope] was almost

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

alone in understanding, had come to be eternal vigilance." Cibber's relation to Pope is exactly analogous to the Vaucanson duck's relation to a real duck. As long as poetry is a matter of obeying the rules, getting the form right, keeping the tone decorous, making the statements clear, then there is no sure way to tell the real from the fake. The poet who knows his own *humanitas,* who sees the world suddenly filled with counterfeit poets, becomes beleaguered in his relations with the world—"Shut, shut, the door, good John, fatigu'd, I said"—and reliant on vigilance and taste to succeed at all; the mockery of the mock heroic becomes a grim business indeed. Pope, like Kenner, must be a Minute Man.

Kenner follows with a splendid demonstration that Pope's "To Augustus" is the first work of Pop Art because just by looking at the lines you cannot tell if they are the insolent work of Pope or the excited incompetent work of Ambrose Phillips: "Pope's signature does not merely accept responsibility for the libel, it creates the libel." Unfortunately, it is too long to work with here. It is not hard to see, however, that Kenner's way of seeing the human and the real in the light of the counterfeit opens up rich possibilities for readers of those ancient mariners Robinson Crusoe and Lemuel Gulliver; Gulliver becomes a kind of Vaucanson's duck, a figure so clear and reasonable and devoted to examining appearances that he has a difficult time explaining to the King of Brobdignag and the Houyhnhnm master what it is to be human. Part of Kenner's summary must suffice:

> Many things have been said about Augustan civilization. We can say one thing more, that related as it was to a philosophy which detached appearances from realities, a science which was learning to read the gone Past by looking at mute present objects (as Edward Gibbon looked at the ruins of Rome), and a cultivated class preoccupied with knowing simulacra of the prestigious, it was engaged as men were never to be again with massive experimentation on the relation of fear to fraud.

What is fascinating here, as so often with Kenner, is the way the style sees everything in an historical moment as expressive: the philosophy, the stance of an historian, Timon's villa. The effect is to make us see that nothing is too small to consider if we know how to consider accurately:

> Perhaps its principal masterpiece is a forged travel book, complete with forged maps, introduced by a cousin of the nonexistent author who discusses the principles upon which he deleted from the manuscript thousands of words that were never written; we learn from it what horses talk about, and how men make shift to counterfeit horsey virtues, and are frightened by its genial implication that our world is more excremental than a horse's. The man who conceived it earned the undying gratitude of his countrymen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> for exposing, under an assumed name and in an assumed character, a scheme for flooding Ireland with counterfeit half-pence, and in his will he endowed a mental hospital.

The tone is whimsical, eccentric, insistent itself on "appearances," the author an ironic Gulliver, an undisturbed Swift. Therefore: "We cannot wonder that eventually the cult of sincerity had to be invented, to give us breathing space before Andy Warhol." There it all is: we can move to the "Digression Concerning Madness," to the lepidopterist in *Dunciad IV,* to Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera,* to Pamela's difficulties with words like "honor" and "honesty"; from there down a generation to the massive scepticism of *Rasselas* and Gibbon, to the Romantics and the cult of sincerity and right down to Warhol and ourselves. The past is lucid, helpful, and the historian is, for all his impassive detachment, invigorating, stirring, urging us to see it all as something we can see better than we have. To care about the past one perhaps needs to be a reactionary, but one need not give in to nostalgia, antiquarianism, specialization, or other forms of self-pity.

Of course reservations can be made, and, once one has said this much, are perhaps in order. A style that implies that there is nothing it cannot transform is one that must, if it is honest, leave much alone. At the beginning of his next-to-last book, *The Stoic Comedians,* Kenner sets his heroes—Flaubert, Joyce, Beckett—off against the writers of the Great Tradition—Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky, George Eliot, Lawrence—and as he does so acknowledges that the writers he does not treat are in many ways more important than those he does. But such a disclaimer does not say enough. One way of praising *The Counterfeiters* is to say that its major authors, Pope and Swift, are greater and more in need of careful attention than Kenner's later comedians, and he does magnificently with them, making them superbly aware and intelligent and controlled about matters of crucial importance. The Swift is so good it scarcely can be improved upon, but the Pope is not. Kenner's Pope is too much like Swift and too much like Kenner, and so cannot move us as does the author of the portrait of Flavia, the tale of Sir Balaam, the vision of triumphant Vice in the first *Epilogue to the Satires.* No one can recover for us the conditions that made Pope urgent and desperate better than Kenner does, but Kenner cannot show us why Pope is among the supremely great writers, as Swift is not, as the later stoic comedians are not. Kenner does not risk, and cannot treat those authors, those works, those aspects of life that demand risk-taking, courage, lurching into doubt or despair. The aloofness of Kenner's wit, cleansing though it is, seals him and us off from anything that might make us sadder or more joyous; the man's sympathies, especially compared with the breadth of his knowledge and the precision of his prose, are narrow. He is not a philanthropic writer, and no acknowledgment that we do not ask most critics to work out of love for man can make us overlook that.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But given the occasion provided by *The Counterfeiters,* given the dreadful treatment generally given this singularly intelligent critic, that is no note to end on. Kenner offers us a way of being historians that allows us to be better about literature than we were, and he also reminds us that the alternatives to being better readers lie all around us, symbolized in this book by the soup cans that were never signed by Andy Warhol. To the soup cans we might add: those Minute Men not named Kenner and who reportedly use the gulches of Santa Barbara for shooting practice; the Party of Youth; its adversary, the Party of Money. Against the forces represented by these things it is not always clear what we have to muster, and in such circumstances Hugh Kenner is invaluable. We eat soup from cans, to be sure, are ourselves Minute Men of sorts, love youth, make money, we live in what Kenner calls the "different and less accessible universe" of things untouched by art. Kenner is able as few are to show us a style, a signature, a way of being literary that can transform the world of soup cans and dead authors "into a sort of word, totally inexplicit, totally assertive, inexplicably permanent."

JAMES P. DEGNAN

The Swiss Chard Caper

ALTHOUGH *Ernest Hemingway,* a biography by Carlos Baker,[1] is somewhat deficient in pre-conception and pre-natal detail—e.g., nowhere in the book does Mr. Baker offer even the vaguest description of the sperm and ovum from which Hemingway was produced—it more than compensates for this deficiency. We learn, for example, that Hemingway's favorite vegetables (though Mr. Baker, for some reason, neglects to say in what order of preference) were "Brussels sprouts, Swiss chard, broccoli, and artichokes with sauce vinaigrette." We also learn that when Hemingway was two years old his nicknames were (to mention only a few) "Abba Bear, Nurnie, Punch, Chipmunk and Bobby" and that, as early as age two, little Ernest "relished scraped apple," pronounced fish "hish," and sang, though "slightly off-key," such songs as "Three Blind Mice" and "I Went to the Animal Fair." Once, Mr. Baker tells us, Ernest went to a circus; and on a number of occasions as Ernest grew older, he played at the home of his cousins, the Hines children, who owned three ponies: "Sorghum, Kitty and Kitty's colt, Princess." The mother

[1] ERNEST HEMINGWAY: A LIFE STORY, by *Carlos Baker.* Charles Scribner's Sons. $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the Hines children, Mr. Baker explains, was Ernest's aunt, "Nettie" (christened "Aginette"), who was the sister of Ernest's father, Dr. Clarence Edmonds Hemingway, M.D., sometimes known as "Ed." (Rather surprisingly, Mr. Baker neglects to give us the childhood nicknames of either "Nettie" or "Ed.") One day the Hines family sold "Sorghum," though Mr. Baker never explains precisely why; nor does he tell us what ever happened to "Kitty" or to "Princess." Mr. Baker, however, compensates for this lapse by telling us that Tyley Hancock, a man who smoked a pipe and sold "iron and brass bedsteads," was the brother-in-law of Ernest's grandfather on Ernest's mother's side. And Mr. Baker also lets us know that when Ernest was in high school in Oak Park, Illinois some (just a few) of his classmates were "Lewis Clarahan, Ray Ohlsen, Lloyd Golder, Paul Haase, Proctor Gilbert (called Bunny), Tom Cusack, Lyman Worthington, Hale Printup, Morris Musselman, and George Madill, who was called 'Pickles.'" Besides having such classmates as these, Hemingway, according to Mr. Baker, also had an acquaintance named Harold Sampson who once milked a cow named Topsy. Once, Mr. Baker tells us, Hemingway had a date with a girl name Sally Carrighar; after the date, Sally and Ernest parted "in amity and that was that." And once Hemingway had a date with a girl named Irene Goldstein. And once Hemingway married a girl named Hadley Richardson whose wedding attendants were "Helen Breaker, Ruth Bradfield, and Katy Smith." On other occasions, according to Mr. Baker, Hemingway came in forty-third in a cross country race; met, in Paris, a "bearded and untidy painter" named Waldo Peirce from Bangor, Maine; and was invited by Jane Heap, "the mannish co-editor of *The Little Review*," to contribute some fiction.

All of which is to say that Mr. Baker's *Hemingway* (697 pages of small print) is a fanatically tedious book. Obviously Mr. Baker has failed to obey Hemingway's first commandment for successful composition: i.e., omit everything unneccessary. But the book is tedious not merely because it is full of trivia; it is tedious because, like a bad paragraph, it is pointless. Indeed, if the book had point, if it had a genuine informing idea, if it had—as all successful literary compositions must have—the unity of a tapestry rather than what it has, i.e., the unity, to quote George Orwell, of "wash on a line," if, in short, the book were properly subordinated, a good deal of what now emerges as trivia might well be transformed into significant detail. And we would not be left, as we are now left, wondering why on earth Mr. Baker even mentions Sally Carrighar or Pickles Madill or Waldo Peirce or Tyley Hancock (Tyley gets seven mentions in the book, while Turgenev, the only writer Hemingway ever admitted to being strongly influenced by, gets only two) or Sorghum or Princess or Jane Heap (much less Jane's mannishness) or any of the literally hundreds of other characters and events arbitrarily tossed into Mr. Baker's bouillabaisse.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In defense of Mr. Baker's *Hemingway,* it should be said that, for all its dullness, it at least is not—as is so much biographical stuff about Hemingway, e.g., A. E. Hotchner's *Papa Hemingway* and innumerable pieces in periodicals—sycophantic. On the contrary, the picture of Hemingway that emerges from Mr. Baker's biography (if, that is, you can muster the patience to piece the picture together from Mr. Baker's economy size bag of jig-saw detail) is that of a genuine louse: a bully, a braggart, a liar and a poseur; a man who took an almost pathological delight in trading on and then betraying friendships; a sadist and a dedicated anti-semite. Baker's book shows us, for example, Hemingway delighting in the sight of a picador being gored to death (for providing such delights "Spain," Hemingway is quoted, was "the most Christ-wonderful country in the world"); shooting an eagle on the wing because there wasn't "anything else around to shoot"; and gut-shooting a hapless cur to "punish" it for killing one of his cats. (The cur, according to Baker, took three days to die; and Hemingway was surprised and annoyed when one of his friends disapproved his sadistic act.) Next to slaughtering animals, Hemingway, Baker's book suggests, apparently enjoyed beating up people, especially Uncle Tom negroes whom he paid to spar with him when he lived in Key West and, to quote Scott Fitzgerald from Baker's book, "harmless weaklings." (Once, for no apparent reason, Hemingway viciously attacked and blacked the eyes of the poet Wallace Stevens who, even at that time, was an old man probably fifty pounds lighter than Hemingway.)

Apparently Hemingway's attitude toward animals and weaklings extended itself to his wives (at least his first two) and to many of his friends. According to Baker, Hemingway freely admitted to leaving his first wife, Hadley, in order to marry Pauline Pfeiffer because he needed Pauline's money. Pauline (or rather Pauline's family) came through by funding Hemingway's first African safari to the tune of $25,000 (this at the bottom of the Depression); and Hemingway rewarded Pauline by 1) making her the rich bitch of the story "Snows of Kilimanjaro" and 2) by leaving her for a younger woman, Martha Gellhorn, admonishing Pauline before he left that she was wicked for having taken him away from Hadley and that "those who live by the sword perish by the sword." (Martha apparently was a match for Hemingway. Disgusted by the cheap theatrics he regularly employed to get the publicity he so craved during his middle and late years, she left him after a brief and sporadic marriage.)

Baker's book also gives accounts of Hemingway's now infamous betrayals of friends like Sherwood Anderson and Scott Fitzgerald as well as an account of his not so well known betrayal of Harold Loeb, perhaps his most dedicated friend during the Paris years of the 1920's and the man who was responsible for getting Horace Liveright to publish *In Our Time,* Hemingway's first major book. Hemingway rewarded Loeb by labeling him a "low down kike" and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by making him the villain (Robert Cohn) of *The Sun Also Rises.* Piling up instance after instance in which Hemingway writes off various people—many of them, like Loeb, friends and benefactors—as "low down kikes" or "smart Jews" Baker's book makes amply clear (whether or not it wants to) that Hemingway's anti-semitism *was no pose.*

Although Mr. Baker is, as he claims to be, more historian than literary critic, although his interest is in giving us the life rather than judging the work of Hemingway, it is clear that, like so many others, he vastly overrates that work. In the book's Foreword, for instance, Baker declares that it will be at least "2000 before anything like a definitive work" (on Hemingway) can even be undertaken; this, because there are so many "lines of investigations" that it will take "*generations* [my italics] of scholars" to follow out. (Reading this one can only gasp: God spare us, scholar and reader alike.) In light of what strikes me as Mr. Baker's vast overestimation of Hemingway's worth, it is interesting to note that one of the most rewarding features of Baker's book (a feature present, like so many others, obviously by accident rather than design) is his account of the early reviews of Hemingway's important books—most of which present the work in a much truer perspective than do later and better known articles and books (although Baker, of course, doesn't recognize this). Baker cites Max Eastman's famous "Bull in the Afternoon," the beautifully accurate review of Hemingway's bull-fight book, *Death in the Afternoon,* a book which Eastman said proved that Hemingway had false hair on his chest. And Baker presents less well known but equally clearheaded and shrewd reviews by critics such as Mumford Jones, Bernard DeVoto, Mike Gold and others. Unintimidated by a generation of critics and scholars dedicated to "discovering" metaphysical profundity in Hemingway's fish stories; or by fantastically silly statements like that of John O'Hara that Hemingway was "the greatest writer since Shakespeare," these early critics and reviewers (writing in the 1930's and early 1940's) saw Hemingway for exactly what he was (and what he remains): a fine travel and sports writer, a master describer of nature, and a man who had written a handful of fine short stories. But these early critics saw what later critics (including Mr. Baker and Mr. Philip Young, whose study of Hemingway is still by far the "best" if you take Hemingway that seriously) failed to see: that Hemingway's anti-intellectualism and self-righteousness, the poverty of his mind and the incredible silliness of his "code," made his claim to being one of the world's greatest imaginative writers (it's hard to believe that he was boorish enough to say, in all seriousness, "I want to knock Mr. Shakespeare on his ass," but Baker makes clear he did say it) one of the most ludicrous of his many ludicrous pretentions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOYCE CAROL OATES

Fiction Chronicle[1]

WHAT IS MOST ALARMING ABOUT *This is Moscow Speaking*, the slim collection of short stories for which Yuli Daniel was condemned to five years hard labor, is its persistent, nightmarish quality of naturalism—its world is "realistic" and yet seems an anti-world, one in which our normal (American?) expectations are casually reversed, by characters with whom we identify easily. Daniel's writing is ordinary, and yet dream-like, not surrealistic but faithful to the gentle impregnation of our real lives by our dream lives; and these "dream" lives are not always interior, but part of a larger, fantastic dream, totally out of our control. Daniel's story "Atonement" suggests that what is demanded in so vicious and so unjust a society as contemporary Russia is nothing less than madness, if one is to achieve "atonement." Only when mad —set at ease—can one exist without the burden of guilt that is naturally his if he lives normally, "realistically," in this society.

The Soviet world, to Daniel's ironic eye, is a world of anti-matter. It is said of a poet invited to read his work at someone's home: "The fact that he's not published doesn't mean a thing. His poems could easily be lousy." More ironically, the anonymous victim of a typical Kafkan story is here an anonymous hangman, but no less a victim—Daniel imagines the executioner and his victim inseparably joined. These excellent stories delineate a tragic world in which intelligent human beings are either corrupted or obsessed by a national, political, spiritual corruption.

Three stories in the collection—"This is Moscow Speaking," "Hands," and "Atonement"—are small masterpieces, worthy of Kafka or Chekhov, and yet totally different from the stories of these great writers. How to make a political statement artistically significant, profound enough to apply to all men?—how to force the arbitrary metaphor of a Public Murder Day into a meaningful and unabsurd state-

[1] THIS IS MOSCOW SPEAKING, by *Yuli Daniel*. E. P. Dutton. $4.95. THE FOUR-GATED CITY, by *Doris Lessing*. Knopf. $7.50. INTO A NEUTRAL COUNTRY, by *Hugo Wolfram*. Hill and Wang. $5.95. THE NEW YORKERS, by *Hortense Calisher*. Little, Brown. $7.95. SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE, by *Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.* Delacorte. $5.95. NATIONAL ANTHEM, by *Richard Kluger*. Harper & Row. $6.95. TWO DAYS, TWO NIGHTS, by *Per Olof Sundman*. Pantheon. $4.95. NIGHT WATCH, by *Stephen Koch*. Harper & Row. $5.95. AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE, by *Hilary Masters*. Macmillan. $6.95. WITHOUT A CITY WALL, by *Melvyn Bragg*. Knopf. $5.95. IN THE MIDST OF EARTH, by *Marilyn Harris*. Doubleday. $5.95. A SET OF VARIATIONS, by *Frank O'Connor*. Knopf. $6.95. TIKE AND OTHER STORIES, by *Jonathan Strong*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $5.75. COME BACK IF IT DOESN'T GET BETTER, by *Penelope Gilliatt*. Random House. $5.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment? These questions seem not to bother Daniel at all; his sense of his society is so sophisticated, his role as a critic of that society so natural, that in spelling out the implications of the "cult of personality" he is spelling out the implications of any denial of the self and its responsibilities in any society.

"This is Moscow Speaking," the story which gives the volume its striking, perfect title, is a story of terror. Yet the terror is not experienced. It is only a possibility. A "Public Murder Day" is declared by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, this day being set aside for private, citizen murder of nearly any other citizen. Anticipation mounts, and yet when the day arrives few citizens take advantage of it—to the extent to which the State speaks of sabotage—and yet the terror is real, complete. An old man says, ". . . those Jews are a wise people. They live in fear. Not in fear of God but in fear of man. They regard everyone as a potential enemy. And they are right." An entire people has been terrorized, simply by having lived through a certain span of history, by their quite involuntary assimilation of a national shame. Does this terrorization involve a loss of the soul, so that the only possible means of atonement is the death of the "realistic," adjusted self, the social self? Daniel is now serving his prison sentence and has gone "inside," to use the phrase his characters use, enduring an incredibly harsh sentence for having published this book (denounced as "mere slander"); the irony of his writing is that it seems already written from the "inside," by a man who was prepared to cross the boundary into the truer, more brutal world of matter, thereby breaking off the dream in which his fellow citizens live.

This sounds confusing, and yet the impact of his stories is simple: we are made to sympathize with people who seem like us and yet who reveal themselves as unhuman, somehow unliving, intelligent and decent men who have become sick because, by not being victims, they have become hangmen. In "Hands," the deteriorating narrator, an ex-member of a firing squad, complains of his shaking hands; his fellow executioners once played a joke on him, putting blanks in his rifle, so that when he shot point-blank at a young priest the priest believed himself spared by God. An unforgettable story! The barren pathos of Kafka's victims, assembled and re-assembled in courtyards, awaiting execution, occasionally experiencing execution, is perhaps outdone by Daniel's pathetic executioners, who cannot exist as executioners because their nerves are shot and who are ruined for everything else, their hands shaking, "no good for any work."

Similarly, "Atonement" is a brilliant exploration of the problem of inexplicable guilt, the kind of guilt that cannot be redeemed for, unlike that of Kafka's people ("Guilt is never to be doubted," says the Officer in "In the Penal Colony"), this guilt really consists in being "innocent"—*in having done nothing—in having* been spared the arbitrary, senseless condemnation by the State that others have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suffered. The narrator has done nothing, and yet he is accused one day of having betrayed an old friend, who was subsequently sent "inside," to work in a labor camp. Nothing he can say or do will exonerate him of this shame, for the shame permeates the entire "innocent" society, just as the simple ballads from the camps seep through from Siberia, to be sung at last by the "intelligensia," by ladies who mouth the crude words delicately. The suffering of some human beings becomes the "literature" of others. "The mad howling of the wolves, the louse-ridden vests, the sores, the tattered foot-rags, the so-called rations, which fell into your aching guts like a lump of clay—it was all literature."

Doris Lessing's out-sized, outrageous, and rather stunning *The Four-Gated City* concerns itself with every imaginable ailment of the twentieth century—the shame of having survived oppressive political epochs is only a part of its concern. Like Daniel, Lessing is interested primarily in the relationship between individuals and the political world in which they find themselves, but her technique is old-fashioned naturalism, utterly convincing, overwhelming us with vast (the novel is 614 small-printed pages long) catalogues of items, moods, conversations, and facts. It is the concluding book of the five-volume *Children of Violence,* Lessing's *Bildungsroman,* which takes Martha Quest from South Africa and a variety of political and romantic adventures to post-war London and finally to a future London, bizarre and hopelessly decadent, the entire world writ small; Martha dies in 1997, on a contaminated island off the coast of Scotland. The novel is extremely demanding and, in its preoccupation with insanity, disturbing in the way that a living, disintegrating personality is disturbing—that is to say, hardly as literature, hardly as something simply read. This is the most ambitious novel I have read in years.

Into a Neutral Country is a first novel that also concerns itself with insanity—more precisely, with the breakdown of equilibrium between the conscious, stable, social self and the unconscious self. The author, Hugo Wolfram, obviously knows a great deal about Freudian psychoanalysis, and is wise enough to give us a variety of points of view about it. But his sympathies are ultimately with the Father-figure of the novel, a psychiatrist who, like Prospero, attempts to manipulate human beings for their own good. The novel is fascinating in its presentation of the "inward refugee," the displaced person (here, displaced from Europe after World War II) who attempts to recreate himself in terms of his new, adopted society, but who ultimately belongs to his own past and is doomed to re-experience it. The displaced person is Pietro Caruana, his new self is Peter Bennett, now a lecturer in philosophy and an important member of a mysterious organization that exchanges political prisoners "illegally." Pietro conquers Peter. The novel is probably contrived, and certainly it is over-intellectualized, but its main thesis is an arresting one—that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the tragic dilemma of civilization itself is dramatized in the confrontation of the "normal" and the "survivor," who excites anxiety and who perhaps will accelerate the disintegration of the "normal" world.

Hortense Calisher's new novel, *The New Yorkers,* tells a very long, technically complex, claustrophobic story which is precipitated by an act of violence—the killing of a woman by her daughter, in the presence of her lover. To the genteel imagination, violence justifies itself because it is a rejection of the genteel; a murderer is always interesting. Those of us who are not genteel are more cynical, knowing that murderers are no more interesting than anyone else, and in literature they are no more interesting than their creators are able to make them. In fact, the danger with a murderer is that he never accomplishes anything else—one act, one crime, one glorious killing, and after that all he can do is think.

Ruth Mannix is twelve when she shoots her mother; but she carries with her a perpetual "odor of memory," which distinguishes her from other, less guilty, people, and which obsesses her father, the important Judge Simon Mannix. He has disguised the murder as a suicide, in the interest of his daughter—"I choose *her,*" he thinks. The facts about the death are kept secret from everyone, including the reader, until in a long, rather lyric monologue Ruth reveals—and here we see how truly genteel Miss Calisher's imagination is—that the killing was done out of mercy, because her mother demanded it.

The novel concerns itself not with facts but with the play of consciousness over facts. Nothing is real; everything is relative. Like the Judge, we become obsessed with the subtleties of guilt, responsibility, the "inter-penetrations of things." Therefore, chronological time is insignificant; we move freely back and forth from the novel's present (1955) to its important pasts (1943 and 1951), so that threads may be taken up, partly explained, different points of view may illuminate ambiguous events, or further darken them. The novel's structure is dictated by Miss Calisher's commitment to what seems to me an old-fashioned, but occasionally effective, means of keeping in the foreground an act that is not only historical, but confused as history; this "act," with its mythical aspirations, must dominate nearly every page of a novel of 559 pages. Who would want to take on such a burden as a writer? In order to keep prominent the theme of violence other violent acts are introduced, rather arbitrarily—a weird episode in which a meek, drunken assistant professor of English slashes his wrists on Ruth; an equally weird episode in which Judge Mannix's brilliant secretary-protégé beats and apparently rapes Ruth in her own father's house, with her father upstairs. Thus Ruth is associated with blood, violence, passivity, the fate of an eternal victim who can be depended upon to remain silent, daughterly, etc.

Miss Calisher has not a logical or intellectual imagination at all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as many critics believe. She is a primitive, a believer in magical powers, fantastic feats of consciousness, the uncanny confusion between inner will and outer history. There is nothing realistic in this novel apart from its concern with the law and its setting, which is done with care (New York City—the upper middle-class—cultured Jews—excellent furniture and antiques); everything is exaggerated, drawn out, worried over, teased, twisted, left dangling. Less direct than either Henry James or Djuna Barnes (an unlikely combination, but strangely suggested by this novel), Miss Calisher is concerned with presenting a kind of ballet which ties together the various characters of the novel into what the Judge calls the "inertia of family life . . . an underground spring neither diseased nor healthy. . . ." How to break free of this inertia? ". . . any man at a window now and then shivered at its argument, assassin deep in the breast. I must move. I must murder. Where is Joy?"

But the will to move, let alone murder, is not strong enough. Everything is dense, weighed down, opaque, slightly insane. *The New Yorkers* is not only a primitive novel, it is something of an insane novel, unfortunately weakened by its moments of sanity and the author's tendency to simulate realism through meandering conversations. There are too many words, too many subtle thoughts. Says the Harvard protégé, Edwin, who takes his place in the ballet as a rapist some years later:

> It wasn't only your possessions that I didn't know the names or uses of, that confused me. . . . It was you yourselves, sir, in your heads and souls. It was like I couldn't even tell secondary sex characteristics at first, or what was the age of who. . . . For a while, until I saw the sequence, you all scarcely *had* any actions. Just talk. Like magic powder—that explodes.

Slaughterhouse-Five or *The Children's Crusade* is a book that hasn't yet been written. Vonnegut is so obsessed, so horrified by his subject that he quite literally cannot approach it, can only hint at it, surrounding it with semi-comic *non sequiturs,* a kind of toned-down *Catch-22*. The subject is the firebombing of Dresden. But this subject is not the content of this novel. The novel is about any number of other things, and it is also about Vonnegut's failure to write the novel, his sense of despair, his conviction that it is a lousy novel, and so forth. Rarely has the failure of a piece of fiction been so obviously tied up with the author's intense desire to write about it. Vonnegut says in his introductory chapter that he has been writing or trying to write the story of the firebombing of Dresden for years, this is his "famous" unwritten novel, and yet what he has finally turned out is a highly artificial, glib, picaresque tale of someone named "Billy Pilgrim." Billy is captured by a flying saucer from the planet Tralfamadore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on his daughter's wedding night and, gifted with a peculiar talent for timelessness, he can see past, present, and future, and relive or live these various times, but without the power to alter anything. This gives Vonnegut the chance to jump maniacally back and forth and ahead in time, creating a jumble of events and non-events, since he is anxious not to write about his alleged subject, which is apparently the firebombing of Dresden. Of course, a writer writes about what he wants to write about, and it is quite possible that Vonnegut has been deluding himself for decades—what he really wants to write about is the nonsense of Billy Pilgrim, and not the seriousness of Dresden. It would have been kind of someone to tell him that he couldn't write about it anyway, since fiction is not written about events but about people: Vonnegut has not created any people here, only bizarre cut-outs mouthing lines that are sometimes funny and sometimes not. His grotesque scenes are unfelt because they are unimagined.

National Anthem is antic and exuberant and witty, though it tends to break down, like most comedy, since there seems no particular point in its continuing. A man of thirty-two named Christopher Kwait assesses himself mournfully ("I do not ski . . . I do not fly . . . I do not go dancing. . . .") and announces to his wife, "I am catastrophically hung up." *National Anthem* is the merry record of his self-therapy, a hymn of praise to the national obsession with action, youth, mindlessness, comic fervor, and "adventure," which the author, Richard Kluger, seems to be satirizing, though this kind of novel seems to me part of a national, or Anglo-American, obsession itself. How to revitalize one's life? Rilke admonishes us to change our lives, but now the very command is a joke—we have the alternative of institutionalized life or the alternative of an outlaw life, which consists mainly of variants upon the institutionalized life (marriage becomes adultery; business becomes robbery). "There are a lot of tyrants to depose," Kluger states wisely.

Two Days, Two Nights is a barren, bizarre, and very disappointing novel by Per Olof Sundman, translated from the Swedish by Alan Blair. It is the story of a manhunt that takes place outside a small town in northern Sweden and much of its slim bulk is taken up with maddeningly banal conversations about cheese, the weather, descending and ascending hills, etc., etc. The dust jacket states that Sundman is a "master of objective narrative in the style of Duras and Robbe-Grillet," which certainly accounts for the dullness of the book, yet there is a peculiarly northern, frozen, sterile, soporific quality to it that makes the reader itch to write it as he goes along, sending the two main characters out into the snow permanently, and freeing their captive for some killings, hopefully bloody ones. Unfortunately, nothing happens. *Night Watch,* by Stephen Koch, is similarly described on its dust jacket as an "Americanized equivalent of the *nouveau roman,*" and when I read this it occurred to me that both

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dust jacket comments were meant to be praiseworthy; people who write dust jacket copy must actually think that the *nouveau roman* is new, exciting, even worth reading, and that the mere mention of it on a dust jacket does not have the approximate effect of a sanction by the old Legion of Decency. Koch, however, is intelligent and talented, though this flimsy scenario with its voyeuristic imperatives ("Look!" "See!") and its preposterous plot of incest between two non-people does not give much evidence of it. Indeed, Koch can barely disguise his impatience and contempt with his own literary exercise; a voice that is presumably his own keeps breaking into the "objective narration" and suggests its comic possibilities, though these are never explored. Of all the taboos, incest is the most boring, certainly in literature, for most readers have had relatives of one kind or another and cannot help but recall them.

Technique of a more conventional avant-garde type dominates *An American Marriage,* which is a combination of many literary concerns—the by-now achingly familiar tale of professor-student love, the equally familiar phenomenon of mad, mod, "swinging" youth startling everyone else, and a kind of post-Jamesian assessment of American-European manners. Hilary Masters would have done better to limit himself to fewer topics, or themes, even to fewer characters, or perhaps to have eliminated entirely his two central characters (what can we do with the eighteen-year-old "swinger" who is really a nice troubled promiscuous girl seeking a father? and what can we do with the wry, ironic, intelligent young academic who scorns both Duke and Chicago (University of?) to teach at something called Scott Junior College?).

Without a City Wall is the third novel of the young English writer Melvyn Bragg, and though it falls apart halfway through what remains of it is fairly interesting. Bragg is obviously influenced by Lawrence, not simply in his depiction of the changing states of love but in his characters and setting as well. The novel takes place in a remote village called Crossbridge, where a successful young man comes to recuperate after a nervous breakdown and to make a new life for himself, rejecting London and the vulgarity of contemporary fashionable life. Given such a start, the young man must naturally come to passionate grief. He falls in love, marries unwisely, and at the novel's conclusion is on his way back to the city of dreams, to destroy himself. Bragg is an old-fashioned novelist; his characters are convincing, often charming, sometimes dull in the way that real people are dull, but inescapable; his penchant for dialogue that explores ideas of a not-revolutionary nature is rather like Lawrence's, and the ideas explored are Lawrencian; one cares about his people. They survive the confines of the plot that contains them.

In the Midst of Earth is a first novel by Marilyn Harris, done in prose of high competence that is burdened with a nearly impossible task: to make consistently interesting a story in which only one event

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

takes place in eighteen years, and that near the end of the novel. A young girl, an orphan, is raised by an isolated, stern, brilliant, atheistic, small-town-baiting, Ku-Klux-Klan-baiting man thirty years her senior, falls in love with him, makes love with him, and then must leave him. The novel is entirely concerned with the girl's interior life—she has no exterior life—but then she has not much of an interior life either, though Miss Harris' rather gentle, hypnotic prose nearly compensates for this. Curiously enough, though we grow up inside the consciousness of this highly-sensitive and unhappy girl, we really don't know her at all; we are locked inside her meticulous, analytical mind and want desperately to be released, to "see" what is going on for at least one page, but we are never freed, the fantasy cannot bear objective examination . . . for instance, why must Mr. Jack live in the Southwest, in this particular town? what is his mysterious disease? couldn't he just as easily live somewhere else, let us say in *Europe*? and is the girl legally his, his step-daughter? Unfortunately, the reality principle has its revenge; the fantasy crumples in a peculiarly unconvincing act of love, and the girl is expelled from Eden at the age of eighteen. She is a teacher, thirty years old, living an empty and widowed existence when the novel opens, and the novel is a single long flashback. The author, Miss Harris, is quite clearly gifted and will write far better novels than this; she is like Stephen Koch, a young writer who transcends his writing. We must all publish first novels if we are to publish any novels at all.

A Set of Variations is a big collection of stories by Frank O'Connor, the first to be published in twelve years. It contains stories chosen by his widow from the work he did between 1957 until his death in 1966, and it is not likely to alter his reputation in any way. O'Connor is a gentler Chekhov; in his hands we never worry, we admire people for their charming limitations, their absolute paralysis within certain outmoded institutions like the Catholic Church, we assume that character is fate, the countryside is fate, the decrees of the Bishop's housekeeper are fate; we enjoy good, sometimes remarkable, story-telling for its own sake. O'Connor has no ideas and no hatreds. His passions are mild. His technical concerns are unexciting. It was his intention to create a book of short stories that had its own unity, stories arranged in an "ideal ambiance" that would strengthen and illuminate one another: hence the title, which is not a very good title, *A Set of Variations*. In reading these stories I was often charmed and a glimmer of something—disorder, terror—would come to me, as if excited by the fiction itself, but this was a mistake, for O'Connor is not concerned with the extremes of either joy or grief, but with ordinary life assessed in an ordinary way. There are flawless stories here, and yet I have difficulty in remembering them—it is as if O'Connor, because of the very dexterity of his writing, created stories of a certain satisfying sameness, populated by people of a certain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

satisfying sameness, a self-enclosed world we need to acknowledge but not to explore.

Tike and Other Stories, by Jonathan Strong, is a first collection of unpretentious, understated, sub-Hemingwayesque tales, centering about an archetypal boy of uncertain appearance, around twenty years old, who is recovering from a nervous collapse and/or a bout with drugs, a Huckleberry Finn to whom the wisecracks of Holden Caulfield would be upsetting. Tike himself lives alone with his dog, McDog, works in a library, runs barefoot and bare-chested in cold weather, and falls in love with a thinly-drawn girl named Val, who evidently betrays him. Strong is relentlessly sincere; he writes in simple sentences, which begin to infect the reader's brain so that one thinks like Tike and his peers, and perhaps all the passionate complexities of life are adult fantasies?—here is Tike's consciousness:

> I fell asleep on the sand. It is later. I am shivering. I put on my sweatshirt. The sun is now down behind the trees. I hear giggling. There are some little girls up in the bushes. I see them. They run away. They must have been watching me sleeping. They are probably about twelve. I should not sleep so much. I sleep about ten hours a day.

The concluding story of the volume, "Patients," is touching in its artlessness, telling of the brief confrontation between the narrator (a brother to Tike) and a hopeless fat boy of thirteen, a patient in a mental hospital. Strong's problem is that he will be acclaimed as a spokesman for the "New Generation" (he is twenty-four) and that he may believe the excessive things people say about him. Apart from occasional flashes of insight, he has really not accomplished much in this volume at all; one leaves it quite unmoved, and yet strangely convinced that Strong will eventually develop into a writer of some stature.

Another volume of short stories, *Come Back If It Doesn't Get Better,* is mature, witty, wise, rather condescending but always readable, in the best tradition of *New Yorker* stories. Here are lovable and loving eccentrics of all types: a brilliant professor of history whose house is filled with books and guests and who keeps falling asleep "in emergencies," a more or less incompetent woman doctor, seen from her daughter's point of view, a very old, ex-famous couple (interviewed by a callow journalist). Miss Gilliatt's characters are oversized and comic, and they manage somehow to be heroic as well. There is a certain archness about her writing that holds one off, as if at arm's length, forbidding genuine compassion; but the material for compassion is teasingly present. Penelope Gilliatt writes in the manner of Muriel Spark, though she is more human and more talented.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

Analyzing Jazz

THIS EXCELLENT BOOK[1] begins rather dismayingly. "Although there is no dearth of books on jazz," the first sentence of its preface warns us, "very few of them have attempted to deal with the music itself in anything more than general descriptive or impressionistic terms." The others add up to "little more than an amalgam of well-meaning amateur criticism and fascinated opinion," which has been "allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis" only because of "the humble, socially 'unacceptable' origin of jazz" and "the widely held notion that a music improvised by self-taught, often musically illiterate musicians did not warrant genuine musicological research"; only because "the academic credentials of jazz were hardly sufficient to produce a serious interest in the analysis of its techniques and actual musical content." My spirits sank further as Schuller went on to praise two books I am not particularly fond of, Winthrop Sargeant's boring *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid,* in which, "dissatisfied with the speculative or impressionistic approach of his predecessors, Sargeant used the tools of theoretical analysis to define jazz and to describe its musical anatomy," and André Hodeir's pretentious *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence,* in which (after a fallow period of ten years) "the analytical screws were tightened once more." But then, after all this unfurling of academic credentials, I was delighted to feel the rhetorical screws loosening and to find myself being told on the next page that Schuller viewed his own book as "an answer in terms of specific musical detail to a series of interrelated questions: What makes jazz work? What makes jazz different from other music? Why do so many people find jazz exciting? How did it get that way? It is as if I were sitting down with a friend not as yet initiated into the mysteries of jazz, listening to records, responding to the kind of questions a musician might ask, and sharing with him the beauty of this music." Schuller would therefore attempt "to combine the objective research of the historian-musicologist with the subjectivism of an engaged listener and performer-composer."

Still, it's almost always a danger sign when a writer starts off by talking about the objective this and the subjective that, and about the need to combine or reconcile them. In writing on music such talk usually suggests a failure to understand the relation of musical analysis to criticism. I completely share Schuller's scorn for what he calls "the in-group jargon and glossy enthusiasm of most writing on jazz," but I disagree with his implication that any jazz critic

1 EARLY JAZZ, by *Gunther Schuller.* Oxford University Press. $9.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who doesn't choose to employ "the tools of theoretical analysis" will necessarily produce such writing since the mere impressions of an engaged listener, unsupported by analysis, remain subjective in some vicious sense: as private, as incommunicable, as incapable of becoming the object of rational argument as a taste for gooseberry jam or backgammon. For of course it's entirely possible for a critic to be highly impressionistic and yet astonishingly accurate and evocative in what he says about music or any other art; and in fact contemporary jazz criticism offers a first-rate example, *The New Yorker*'s Whitney Balliett. So far as I know, Balliett has never quoted a bar of notation, and yet whenever I recall or listen to the music he describes I can see an illuminating connection between what he's written and what I hear, whether or not I turn out to agree with the judgment that follows from his description. If he did choose to employ musical analysis, it would merely pin-point more clearly and elucidate more fully details of his description; it would not make them intelligible or valid in some sense that they had not been before. For except when a very limited, strictly technical point is being made, the critical value of musical analysis depends upon the taste and judgment that have told the analyst which bits of musical sound to reproduce in notation and what to say about them—upon, that is, his impressions as an engaged listener. Therefore it's misleading to tag the two roles of listener and analyst with opposed terms like "subjective" and "objective" because they are not really opposed: the latter is properly just a completion, a fuller realization, of the former.

I have labored this theoretical difference between Schuller and me because it has practical consequences. In his preface, describing what he takes to be the peculiar role of musical analysis in jazz criticism, he writes:

> Whereas we are interested primarily in the *Eroica* and only secondarily in someone's performance of it, in jazz the relationship is reversed. We are only minimally interested in *West End Blues* as a tune or a composition, but primarily interested in Armstrong's rendition of it. . . . A page of written score is after all a concrete object; like a painting it can be studied at leisure; it will not pass away. Performed music, however, even when recorded, exists only in time; it passes in an instant; it is in motion and cannot be frozen in time, as even the motion picture frame can.

Of course a page of score is as much a concrete object as a painting; but unlike a painting it is not a work of art—except perhaps incidentally, if it happens to be beautifully engraved. Like a painting it can of course be studied at leisure, but the point of studying it is never to clarify one's view of *it,* as is usually the case with the painting, but rather to clarify one's view of the musical sound it represents. And what this amounts to is clarifying one's view of that musical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sound in some performance or other—usually, I suppose, an ideal performance existing in one's head, compounded of the best things from the actual past performances one has heard. Just as surely as Armstrong's recorded performance of *West End Blues,* any performance of the *Eroica,* and therefore the *Eroica* itself, "exists in time" in the sense that it is experienced by the listener as progressing through time rather than as standing still the way a painting does. The danger of Schuller's analogy is that it invites us to view a notated text in isolation from the musical sound it represents, to view it with the *eye* as a self-sufficient, static pattern rather than to use it to help the *ear* reconstruct a progression of sound moving through time; and when the musical analysis goes wrong in the chapters that follow, it is because Schuller himself does precisely this (though of course the notated texts he is dealing with most of the time are not printed scores but rather transcriptions he has made from records).

The most damaging examples occur in his first chapter, "The Origins," in which he sets out to show that "*every* musical element—rhythm, harmony, melody, timbre, and the basic forms of jazz—is essentially African in background and derivation." Though it is the book's most ambitious chapter, and therefore demands most detailed consideration here, I found it the least satisfactory. Since most of the musical examples are taken from a work that was issued without recordings of the music it transcribes, A. M. Jones's *Studies in African Music,* Schuller is necessarily reduced to talking about texts viewed in isolation, about the mere appearance on the page of notes that represent music neither he nor we will ever hear. Therefore he can legitimately make only the very limited sort of technical point I referred to in passing above. In the section on rhythm, for example, he can reproduce two transcriptions from Jones's second volume to support his statement that in a seven-part African ensemble "*six* of the seven lines may operate in different metric patterns which are, moreover, staggered in such a way that the downbeats of these patterns rarely coincide." But he cannot show from Jones's transcriptions alone what he needs to show in order to establish a genuine connection between the rhythmic character of African music and that of jazz, namely that African music possesses the two characteristics that he says give jazz its distinctive rhythmic feel: (1) "the continuity—the forward-propelling directionality—with which individual notes are linked together," and (2) "a specific type of accentuation and inflection with which notes are played or sung," a "' democratization' of rhythmic values" in which the "so-called weak beats (or weak parts of rhythmic units) are . . . brought up to the level of strong beats, and very often emphasized *beyond* the strong beat." For of course these characteristics no more show up in the mere notes on Jones's page than "the continuity—the forward-propelling directionality—" that Toscanini gave to the first movement of the *Eroica* shows up in the mere notes on Beethoven's page.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Schuller contends that Jones's transcriptions offer "musically documented proof of the fact that the syncopation of jazz is no more than an idiomatic corruption, a flattened-out mutation of what was once the true polyrhythmic character of African music." But so far as I can see they offer nothing of the kind. In one of his very few references to jazz, Jones draws a contrast between West African music's "essential basis of cross-rhythms" and "the typical reiterative bass of jazz which in essence is completely Western," and what his transcriptions do explain, in fascinating detail, is the strictly technical matter of how that "essential basis of cross-rhythms" is organized—they explain, that is, exactly what makes African music rhythmically unlike rather than like jazz. Therefore trying to use Jones's book as Schuller does is a little like trying to use an anatomy text to prove that the motorcycle is no more than an idiomatic corruption of the horse. And here as well as in later chapters, when Schuller tries to find examples from actual jazz performances of something like African polyrhythmic organization, the ones he turns up are unconvincing. Usually they are cases in which a soloist momentarily plays around rather than on the beat, rushing or hesitating slightly; and of course there is all the difference in the world between such momentary deviations from a fixed beat and the sustained polyrhythmic patterns Jones is interested in. So finally, as his main bit of evidence for the African derivation of jazz syncopation, Schuller is forced to offer a fanciful translation, into the style and instrumentation of a 1920's small band, of one of Jones's transcriptions. But of course what's crucial in establishing such a derivation is whether one's *ear* can hear in the African ensemble's performance rhythmic qualities it can also hear in actual jazz performances, not whether by notational sleight of hand one can construct a hypothetical bit of jazz improvisation that contains some of the same notes as the transcription of an African performance and therefore looks vaguely like it to the *eye*. And anyway, even the look of Schuller's hypothetical rescoring, with the four-piece rhythm section of the 1920's band chunking away at that "reiterative bass," emphasizes the differences rather than the similarities between the two idioms and weakens his case still further.

Now like anyone else who knows jazz and who has listened to records of African drumming, I have a vague intuitive sense that the similarities are there so far as rhythm is concerned—though Schuller doesn't tell me what they are. But when it comes to the other elements of jazz, I'm not even sure that the similarities are there in the first place; certainly Schuller doesn't demonstrate them. As he repeatedly tells us, African music doesn't really have melody or harmony in the same sense that our music does, and so his conclusions in these areas can only be very tentative; and when it comes to timbre, he is reduced to the vague conjecture that the "larger-than-life sound and projection" of all the great jazz soloists "must have been" what "helped to make Buddy Bolden legendary around 1900" and must ultimately

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

derive from "the open-toned, natural quality of African speech and song." (Jones, on the other hand, drawing a contrast with Islamic music, writes that "Africans, *like Europeans and the West generally,* sing all their own songs with open tone and a perfectly natural way of singing." My italics.) In the section on forms Schuller tells us that "African formal elements that interest us most in relationship to jazz are: (1) the so-called call-and-response pattern, (2) the repeated refrain concept, and (3) the chorus format of most recreational and cult dances." But don't the dances and folk-music of countless nations offer examples of the second and third of these? Schuller himself, after pointing out that "the 'chorus' concept is conspicuously absent in European 'art music,' " feels compelled to add immediately: "except for the passacaglia or chaconne form, which significantly originated as a dance form." Yes—but not as an African dance form. The call-and-response pattern, dear to the hearts of all jazz historians, may well have stronger claims to be considered uniquely African (though an anthropologist friend of mine who has worked not only in Africa but also in India and with American Indians denies this). But in any case such claims demand more demonstration than I've ever seen them receive in books on jazz. It won't do just to assume, as Schuller does and as others before him have done, that the call-and-response pattern is as special and unlikely a means of expression for a culture to have developed as is sonata form, say, and that it therefore must be uniquely African.

Throughout the chapter, then, Schuller seems to me to assert more continuity between African music and jazz than emerges from his evidence—even in the case of rhythm, where a stronger case probably might have been made. And so finally he has to fall back on the Racial Memory. He speaks of "the Negro's inherent love for poly-rhythmic organization," he concludes that in creating the riffs of the swing era "the Negro was simply perpetuating his unawareness of key centers in the European sense," and, after pointing out that "splitting . . . the four beats in a bar into eight" was "one of Charlie Parker's most enduring innovations," he asks melodramatically: "Was this—like the emergence of some underground river—the musical reincarnation of impulses subconsciously remembered from generations earlier and produceable *only* when the carrier of this memory had developed his instrumental technique sufficiently to cope with it?" That this sort of lapse is due to carelessness rather than to any firmly held theory is shown, I think, by the fact that while Schuller's list of modern jazz musicians who have mysteriously retained the African polymetric time sense is composed wholly of Negroes, the musical example he cites immediately after it is from a Stan Getz solo. Yet it ought to be said loudly and clearly that whatever musical resources were brought to this country from Africa, once they were here they became accessible to any musician, black or white, who was suffici-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ently gifted to make use of them and who kept the right musical company. (To take only the first example that comes to mind: could any of us, on aural evidence alone, really tell that Jack Teagarden was white rather than black?) As to the larger question of what these musical resources actually were and how influential they were on the development of jazz, the failure of so intelligent and knowledgeable a writer as Schuller to come up with anything really solid confirms me in thinking that too much essential evidence has been irretrievably lost for us ever to formulate a satisfactory answer. The whole effort always has too much an air of *ex pede Herculem;* I wish writers on jazz didn't feel they had to begin with a chapter on "origins" in order to establish their own seriousness and that of their subject.

Once Schuller moves on to music he has not only heard but has known and loved for years, he is of course on much firmer ground. Even the writing picks up as the creaky prose of the historian-musicologist—"As the Reconstruction era ground to its chaotic finale, and as, finally, the Northern 'occupation' troops were withdrawn under Southern political pressures, the Negroes found their road to liberty blocked by a hardened core of white citizenry"—gives way (mostly) to the perceptive and often eloquent prose of the engaged listener. Most of the second chapter, "The Beginnings," is rightly spent on King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. The musical analyses are genuinely illuminating because Schuller doesn't spin fantasies about the mere appearance of the notes on the page but instead uses his texts to locate and explain things that he has actually heard and that we hear too upon relistening to the records—the tendency, for example, of Armstrong's second-cornet lines on the Okeh version of *Mabel's Dream* to "[burst] at the seams, . . . barely content to be confined to their secondary role." And the general descriptions of the band's sound are just right: "Each piece is like a solid, horizontally spun-out block of sound, maintained at an unswervingly steady pace and density. And yet we are fascinated because the linear and the vertical details *within* this sound-block are, for the most part, continually varied in kaleidoscopic fashion." The chapter is marred only by the melodramatic writing that emerges whenever the historian-musicologist regains command and begins straining to find tendencies and lines of development:

> The extraordinary unity of the Creole Jazz Band was exacted at the price of renouncing all stylistic progress. It represents the New Orleans style's last-ditch stand before the world and at the same time its finest full flowering. But the handwriting was already on the wall. . . . Oliver's musical vision contained the seeds of its own demise: in perfecting and ritualizing the ideals of a just bygone era, it wrote its own death sentence. Louis Armstrong, fifteen years younger than his mentor, was to take the same elements and, seeing them through an entirely different personality, was to use them to precipitate the first major revolution of jazz.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The next chapter, "The First Great Soloist," in which Schuller deals with that revolution, is better still but is similarly marred. Again the musical analysis gives an added dimension to accurate evocative descriptions of what one hears on the records; specifically, it helps Schuller to show how beautifully organized Armstrong's choruses were in the early days and thus to combat tellingly what he calls "the strange notion held by many jazz musicians and jazz buffs that structural logic, a conscious sense of variation and development, is an intellectual preoccupation incompatible with true jazz creativity." But again he can't resist finding a bit more drama and tension and struggle than the records actually reveal. After remarking that the 1927 Hot Seven dates "produced only one truly remarkable performance (out of eleven)," he asks: "Was the strain of Armstrong's phenomenal personal success beginning to show? Was he pushing himself beyond what he could cope with? Did he take less care in preparing the numbers?" Even if one accepts the judgment, which does seem to me a bit severe, I think the undeniable flaws of some of the Hot Seven sides are better explained by the dull truth that every improviser's imagination flags occasionally, and by the fact that at this stage Armstrong's imagination, when it was not flagging, was so extraordinary that it sometimes outran even his own nimble fingers. Anyway, it was only two weeks before the first Hot Seven date that Armstrong made one of his most perfect records, the version of *Wild Man Blues* issued under Johnny Dodds's name—which Schuller doesn't mention. Schuller's general view of Armstrong's career is that around 1930 he simply decided to cash in on his talents, and that while commercialism never completely destroyed him, his development as a creative musician stopped there. I pretty much agree, but surely it's too harsh to say, as Schuller does, that the records of the 1930's "added nothing to Armstrong's stature."

The one thing that struck me as seriously wrong with the chapter was Schuller's puzzling overestimation of the record he mentioned in his preface when discussing the role of musical analysis in jazz criticism, the 1928 *West End Blues.* Certainly it has always been one of Armstrong's most highly praised records, but I for one have always found it unbearably stagy—the carefully "impassioned" solo chorus, complete with four bars of sustained high B-flat, seems to me a clear early instance of the commercialism that was to take over the records in the decade that followed. And I'd expect Schuller to agree—not only because of his general view of Armstrong's career but also because he calls attention to "the stiffly-arranged 'let's-wow-the-public' ensembles" and the efforts "to be too flashy, too hip," that mar the other sides recorded at the same date. But instead he sees it as perhaps "the crowning achievement . . . of Armstrong's recorded output." That this judgment is in some real way inconsistent with Schuller's whole way of listening to Armstrong seems to me to be indicated by the fact that the discussion of *West End Blues* is the one place in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the chapter where the musical analysis goes wrong because, just as with the African music, Schuller is making points about what the eye sees on the page rather than what the ear hears.

The record opens with a solo introduction by Armstrong that begins very fast but gradually ritards as a series of triplet figures leads to a high C in the fourth bar. Schuller discovered, and recorded in his transcription of the passage, that at the beginning of the third bar, where the ritard and the triplets set in, the tempo "does not change haphazardly, but in fact in a precise rhythmic relationship to the previous tempo: the triplet eighth-notes of measure three equal the duple eighth-notes of measure two." He then dignifies this feat by applying to it Elliott Carter's term "metric modulation" and, in order to explain how Armstrong could have achieved something so extraordinary, he goes on to indulge in what historians call spontaneous attribution: "As Louis moved to the *g* (fourth note in measure three), the triplet pattern emerged in his mind," and so on. But since a very similar triplet pattern ends the first chorus, it seems reasonable to assume that the one in the introduction was worked out beforehand. More important, as one listens to the record the ear only has time to take in the supposed "metric modulation" as part of an ordinary progressive ritard: the equivalence Schuller notes and makes so much of counts for nothing because it goes by too quickly and because the whole shape of the phrase directs our attention to the high C that we know is coming at the end. His mistake here is very much like the sort of mistake often made by trained linguists whose ability to discover phonemic or syntactic patterns in poetry leads them to assume automatically that such patterns are critically relevant when in fact they are only distractions.

Thus Schuller's initial attempt to draw a distinction between the use of musical analysis in writing on jazz and its use in writing about music that already exists in score can also be seen to be mistaken, for both the proper use of analysis and the way it is most commonly misused are the same for the two sorts of music. Once the analyst has notated a passage from *West End Blues,* it bears the same relation to his experience of the record as a score of the *Eroica* does to his experience of the symphony: the critical usefulness of either text consists solely in its ability to help him explain more fully details of the music as they are experienced in their temporal, dramatic context; the only difference is that the notated passage from *West End Blues* sheds light only on one actual performance rather than on a variety of actual performances or an ideal imagined performance.

Perhaps part of what's behind Schuller's overestimation of *West End Blues,* and the labored analysis by which he attempts to support it, is an unconscious tendency to side with musicians he considers to be revolutionary, a tendency that makes him a little too eager to find signs of revolution in their work. Because the "metric modulation"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looks revolutionary on the page, it is brought in as further evidence of Armstrong's stature as a musical mover and shaker—as if any further evidence, in addition to that which Schuller provides in the rest of his chapter, were needed! Most of the distortions of taste that occur in the rest of the book seem to me to be produced by the same tendency. The one serious flaw in a fine chapter called "Virtuoso Performers of the Twenties" is an oddly nervous and cursory treatment of Beiderbecke. Recalling Schuller's preoccupation with African origins, one might well expect him to have trouble with the one great white musician he has to deal with. (In his preface he explains that Teagarden and the white Chicago musicians are to be reserved for a forthcoming companion volume.) Perhaps this is partly responsible, but I think the real trouble is that Beiderbecke was, as Schuller points out, a musical conservative compared with Armstrong. Therefore though Schuller sensitively describes "the essential Bix, unspectacular, poignant, with a touch of reserve and sadness shining through," he seems anxious to drop the matter and move on. After some rather misty hypothesizing about Bix being "a man who could not let himself go emotionally" and about his lyricism perhaps coming from "the singing tradition of [his] grandfather's *Männerchor*," Schuller quotes a pleasant solo from one of the early Wolverines records and then begs off on the grounds that "Beiderbecke's career was too short and too checkered to permit a complete view of his work." He barely refers to the Goldkette and Whiteman records, and the only musical point he can find to make about any of the great later solos is again about something seen in the transcription rather than heard on the record: a moment in *Sorry* that he takes to be one of Bix's rare and (given his conservative nature) inexplicable "moments of real discovery, . . . when Bix plays an 'asymmetrical' between-the-beats phrase as naturally as if he had done it every day for years." And so it looks to the eye; but what the undistracted ear hears is just another of those wonderfully lazy, insinuating hesitations that Bix presumably had been creating every day for years.

Conversely, when Schuller comes in the same chapter to deal with a musician who is not only revolutionary but little known, his interest is much more deeply engaged—to the point where he overpraises. Thus he writes eloquently of the trumpet player Jabbo Smith's "exceptional talent for fantasy," perceptively compares one of his breaks to the later work of Eldridge and Gillespie, and understandably sympathizes with the plight of musicians like Jabbo "who do not quite catch on because their work is too advanced or sophisticated technically, while at the same time they lack just enough of the personality quotient which is so necessary to communicate with a broad public." And here, as was not true with Beiderbecke, the musical analysis functions as it should, to throw the essential qualities of Jabbo's playing into clear relief. But Schuller himself is so anxious

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to win a broad public for Jabbo that he can't resist going too far: "He had a vivid imagination and evidently, by virtue of a natural embouchure and an excellent technical foundation, could realize anything that came to his mind." When one actually listens to the excellent series of Rhythm Aces records (now happily available on two Melodeon LP's), one finds that there isn't one on which Jabbo's playing isn't marred by momentary rhythmic or intonational insecurities and failures of invention a good deal more serious than most of the ones Schuller points out on the Armstrong Hot Seven records.

The next chapter, "The Big Bands," is equally fine but contains the same sorts of distortion. Schuller is best when he's dealing with those "territory bands" of the Southwest that only recently have begun to receive the attention they deserve, largely as a result of Franklin Driggs's excellent essay on them in Hentoff and McCarthy's 1959 collection *Jazz*. But again Schuller's eagerness to win listeners for these little known and, in some cases at least, rather "advanced" musicians leads him into exaggeration. Of Peanuts Holland and Snub Mosely, the lead trumpet and trombone of the Alphonse Trent band, he writes: "Both players, though original in their styles, were also maddeningly elusive. It was as if they did not quite dare to project their unconventional ideas, and Mosely's solos often contain more silences than sound. Between the sudden spurts and flashes of oblique ideas one is forced to imagine the rest, left unstated, but implied. In the end that is what separates players like Holland and Mosely from someone like Armstrong or trombonist Dicky Wells: the latter stated their ideas fully, unequivocally, and with complete authority." Surely this is special pleading. The main thing that separates such musicians from an Armstrong or a Dicky Wells is that their ideas just weren't as good, or their imaginations as fertile, in the first place; no talk about elusiveness or unconventionality, no charitable filling in of the silences by imagining "what is left unstated, but implied," will explain this fact away. Of Holland's exciting but sloppy solo on Trent's record of *After You've Gone,* Schuller tells us that "the *a* naturals Holland plays against the F minor chords in bars two and ten hardly appear as errors in this context," and that "at a relatively fast tempo, the ear does not perceive these theoretical errors as serious ear-shattering flaws." No—but it does perceive them as errors, and not just theoretical ones.

The other half of the chapter is largely devoted to Fletcher Henderson and most of it too is very fine. But Schuller's affection for unconventional and unknown musicians again leads him to slight an important musician who doesn't fill the bill, Henderson's great trumpet player Joe Smith, who, like Beiderbecke, was something of a musical conservative and was in fact known among musicians as "the black Bix." Of *Stampede,* one of the band's finest records containing one of Smith's finest solos, Schuller tells us only that "Smith's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and [Rex] Stewart's solos reflect respectively the present and the future of the band's style in contrasting choruses"; he does not tell us that while Stewart's is enthusiastic and hard-hitting but imperfectly organized and executed, Smith's is suave and perfect. Moreover, he unaccountably attributes another fine Smith solo, on *T.N.T.*, to Armstrong, and he sternly dismisses Smith's hilarious parody of a white lead trumpet on *I'm Coming Virginia* as "saccharine."

I could go on arguing with Schuller's book forever—it's that sort of book. Which is one way of saying that despite the general misconceptions about musical analysis and the particular faults of judgment that I've tried to point out, Schuller succeeds admirably in creating an atmosphere that encourages discussion of those questions that he set himself initially. The only two chapters that remain to be mentioned are "The First Great Composer," in which I was delighted to see Jelly Roll Morton receive the sort of praise that I think he deserves and that he hasn't been getting much of in the last ten or fifteen years, and the final chapter, "The Ellington Style: Its Origins and Early Development," which Schuller had published another version of in the Hentoff and McCarthy collection. He is very acute in dealing with both men as composers and in analyzing the structure of their compositions. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Morton chapter is a subtle but completely convincing argument that when jazz's greatest self-publicist made his famous claim to have "invented jazz" he was not just indulging in another of his outrageous boasts but was saying something both precise and defensible; with Ellington, the stress falls where it belongs, on the fact that he "has been largely unsuccessful in the big, extended forms" because he is "basically a miniaturist." (I was glad, incidentally, to see that Schuller had cut an admiring reference to the pretentious "extended" work *Black, Brown, and Beige* that appeared in the earlier version of this chapter.)

What one finally wants to say, then, is that Schuller has given us an extremely valuable book—even though its value doesn't reside exactly where he may think. Anyone who either enjoys jazz already or wants to learn how will benefit greatly from reading it and will reach the last page reluctantly, glad that there is to be a sequel and impatient for its appearance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARVIN MUDRICK

The End of the World or Else

THESE BOOKS[1] ARE ALL prophecies and road maps for the last decades of our century. The most parochial is *The Higher Learning, the Universities, and the Public,* a collection of dicta on "the economics and politics" of academic scholarship by Carl Kaysen, Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton.

Mr. Kaysen writes like a mutilated IBM card. "If the distinguishing characteristic of the true university is taken to be the training of scientists and scholars and the production of serious work in science and scholarship, then . . . no more than three dozen institutions, currently accounting for nearly two-thirds the total output of Ph.D. degrees, constitute the body of American universities in this definition which is central to our concern with the higher learning." Piety forbidding his enunciation of the thirty-six sacred names, Mr. Kaysen is content to list the true university's "social functions," which "can be considered for our purposes in terms of four categories. . . . The first category is the creation of new knowledge and its integration into the present body of knowledge in the widest sense. In this context," exclaims, warming to his theme, the Professor of Advanced Hubris and Elementary Tautology, "I use 'knowledge' to cover the whole range of organized cognitive activity . . . including, increasingly, the fine arts." The "next function" is "the transmission of knowledge to the new generation." The "third function" is "the application of knowledge to the solution of 'practical' problems in the wider society." And "the final role of the higher educational system is the socialization of late adolescents and young adults, teaching them how to fit into the social roles they will fill as adults."

Only the first three functions are in Mr. Kaysen's opinion worthy of the university. The fourth—civilizing the young savages—he believes it should "abandon" to the non-U universities, the colleges, "the junior colleges and schools of art and music." The "great universities" will concentrate on "the million graduate and professional students expected a decade hence, rather than the eight or nine times as numerous candidates for first degrees"; and the government and public will respond by loading the g. u.'s with grants, fellowships, linear accelerators, and measureless admiration. Meanwhile Mr. Kaysen ig-

[1] THE HIGHER LEARNING, THE UNIVERSITIES, AND THE PUBLIC, by *Carl Kaysen.* Princeton University Press. $4.75. THE CHILDREN OF THE DREAM, by *Bruno Bettelheim.* Macmillan. $6.95. THE UNPERFECT SOCIETY, by *Milovan Djilas.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $5.00. THE STATE OF SIEGE, by *C. P. Snow.* Scribners. $2.95. OPERATING MANUAL FOR SPACESHIP EARTH, by *R. Buckminster Fuller.* Southern Illinois University Press. $4.25.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nores not only the futility of almost all graduate training and research but the general disaster of undergraduate programs everywhere, the thousand-seat lecturehalls, incompetent and embittered platoons of teaching assistants and freshly hired Ph.D.'s, compulsory superannuated subcognitive subject-matter even among the ivy of the unnamable three dozen; he mentions once, disdainfully, "students' strident demands for more 'relevance' in the curriculum"; "Let 'em eat cake," murmurs this Marie Antoinette of the unteachable American academic bureaucracy.

Bettelheim and Djilas, survivors of genocidal European politics, can't afford to be so inattentive to persons and mere facts. *The Children of the Dream* is a troubling book, partly for the reasons that make it a blurb-writer's nightmare. Bettelheim spent six weeks in an Israeli kibbutz to study the upbringing of the children; and, since the inferences he draws range more or less uninterruptedly along the entire scale from very favorable to very unfavorable, since besides the book is messily written and repetitive and difficult to summarize, the jacket-blurb settles on an upbeat chorus of good news for the next generation of American slum mothers: "The implications for our methods of child-rearing in the slums, and even in middle-class homes, are tremendous."

Actually, the book is about the pathos of systems and the treacherous malleability of the human personality. The founders of the kibbutzim, themselves in flight from the ruins of the European ghetto, designed these egalitarian manual-labor communes to embody the ultimate revolutionary-socialist order and (not unimportantly) to do away with all jokes about Jewish mothers. What the kibbutzim have proved is that, under communal rather than maternal care, children can grow up into unafflicted, busy, reliable, purposeful adolescents and adults, insusceptible to oedipal conflicts (which require mothers and fathers!), untempted by delinquency, living their lives within and for the sake of the group. Yet, as Bettelheim continues to interview and examine these "radically new personalities," he discovers that with every apparent gain comes a corresponding loss: security at the expense of trust, intimacy, intensity; collective conscience at the expense of imagination and private emotions; social adjustment at the expense of variety and subtlety of response to unanticipated circumstances; stability at the expense of individuality and change:

> In the founding generation was an inordinately high percentage of imaginative persons given to innovation, deep thought, and strong convictions, at the heart of whose commitments stood social problems. Given these and related characteristics in such high degree, one cannot help expecting to find them in the children, to whose rearing they devoted so much planning and thought. But this one does not.
> Somehow these dynamic people managed to create a static society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Revolutionary rhetoric is a blueprint for the static society, the ultimate system: "the end of history," Utopia, the kingdom of God on earth, Paradise, in which there isn't much to do except wither into a common identity. Nor is sex a way out, because, having begun with reprobations of bourgeois impotence and sugarplum visions of instant debauchery, revolutions sooner or later sour into puritanism. In the kibbutzim, sexual health for children and adolescents consists of "open" and "natural" collective living arrangements without collective or any other sexual activity:

> . . . I was told again and again . . . that "our children and adolescents are entirely natural about sex," meaning always that they do not masturbate or practice any other sexual behavior. "They don't have to," I was told, "because we've taught them it's all natural." Instead they repress and sublimate into the "purity" that kibbutzniks view as resulting from their "natural" rearing, and as proving its merits. . . .
>
> When I asked a group of boys . . . how it was, for example, when the girls had their menses, I was told, "That's no problem. They simply tell us to turn around." And turn around they do, both boys and girls, making themselves unseeing, and to a large degree unfeeling, about sex.

Perhaps sex and pleasure are too private and special, too inaccessible to social planners; or perhaps, as Bettelheim suggests,

> . . . the very effort to create a just society leads to puritanism, if only because the new and better society is expected to have erased all the problems of the old one. Given man's sexual problems, no society yet has solved them perfectly, but this fact the creators of a utopian society cannot accept. Thus the earliest period of the kibbutz saw a widespread promiscuity, which was supposed to rid man of his sexual difficulties. When this did not happen, then "purity" under the guise (or in consequence) of being "natural and open" about sex was expected to do it.

Or perhaps a closed society in a state of permanent war with all its neighbors is no place for experiments.

Milovan Djilas is a former Vice-President of Yugoslavia and a brave man who has spent the last fifteen years mostly under arrest and in his country's prisons, for nothing is more vengeful than an infallible system that doesn't work:

> At the time of my second release from prison, Yugoslavia was in the throes of its so-called economic reform, a reform to which Yugoslav policy had been driven . . . with the pressure of deficits and economic backwardness as the decisive factors rather than an ana-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> lytical and undoctrinaire appreciation of conditions and methods necessary to a modern economy. . . . Its objectives . . . were not bad in themselves—profitability, a link with the world market, the free movement of goods and capital, currency convertibility, and managerial efficiency and economies in the administration. But in practice people were putting no effort into making a success of the reform, and they could not do so because the old political and administrative structure was still there and the ownership structure was unchanged, *i.e.*, the same monopoly of party bureaucracy was guardian and controller. . . .

Communism's successes have been chiefly political rather than social and economic: "Powerful, invincible, impregnable as a revolutionary movement and as an organization of violence, Communism has proved to be weak under so-called normal conditions and in free human situations. . . ."[2]

> . . . [it] has in the main shown itself capable of effecting the transformation of a craft and peasant economy, albeit with harsh and costly methods; but it has plunged into difficulties, as was inevitable, because it now has to pass out of the industrial stage, with the aid of electronics and massive education programs and the employment of skilled scientific workers, into a new and more complex stage—the age of automation and mass production and mass consumption.

Because he is a calm and hopeful man, Djilas maintains his sense of humor under provocation from parlor revolutionaries who can still regard other people's misery as picturesque:

> . . . the actual position of the small, undeveloped countries . . . [is not] as [it] has been described by Simone de Beauvoir in *Les Belles Images:* "In all countries, whether socialist or capitalist, man is being crushed by technology, alienated from his work, fettered, and

[2] An American writer who visited Leningrad several years ago recalls his sensasation, while he was entering his hotel room there, of stepping fifty years back into the past: factory-fresh 1910 furniture, 1910 electric-light bulbs; evidently, no innovation in technique or design could penetrate the terrorized thickheadedness of a bureaucracy which had to protect its jobs and its lives against its assumption of responsibility for everything. This visitor had seen the future and it wasn't working yet. What mainly interests Djilas (sacked, suppressed, jailed) is the *inefficiency* of the Communist regimes. The Russian novelist Anatoly Kuznetsov, who defected to England in August 1969, describes "Marxism-Leninism . . . [as] utterly obsolute, rigid and naive . . . utterly incapable of resolving the contradictions in society today. . . ." In short, breaking all those eggs for fifty years hasn't even now produced the omelet. And, luckily, some eggs are unbreakable: "I hereby, publicly and definitively, disassociate myself," announces the late Kuznetsov "from everything that has been published under the name of 'Kuznetsov' . . . I solemnly declare that Kuznetsov is a dishonest, conformist, cowardly author. I renounce this name. . . . All my writings published from this day onward will bear the signature 'A. Anatol.' . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stupefied. Instead of stretching out for an abundance which does not exist, and perhaps never will, people ought to content themselves with a minimum standard of living, as some of the very poor communities still do, in Sardinia and Greece, for instance, where technology has not penetrated nor money corrupted. There people know a harsh happiness, because certain values are preserved, values that are truly human values—dignity, brotherhood, generosity, which give life a unique flavor. . . ." I do not know what Madame de Beauvoir's "minimum standard of living" is, but I suspect it is a little more than what she is idealizing in "some of the very poor communities." Life in Sardinia may look "harshly happy" to Parisian left- and right-wing intellectual cliques, but I know from my own Montenegro, in spite of the "values preserved" there, "values that are truly human," just what life has been like—a life of hunger, hatred, and death.

It takes deep thinkers like Mme de Beauvoir and Norman Mailer to conclude that human values are being crushed by technology or that nylon causes cancer. Djilas merely hopes for material abundance and puts his faith in technology, on the unprecedented foundation of which he expects all economies and systems of ownership to come round, however reluctantly, to establishing themselves.

C. P. Snow is another deep thinker who's been worried about things for years. Should he, over the years, have kept the rest of us in the dark for our own peace of mind? Now, in his latest little nonbook, he confesses he shouldn't have: ". . . Nearly ten years ago I gave another lecture, which I called *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, and which produced, and in fact still continues to produce, a certain amount of discussion. . . ." (the famous lecturer pauses a moment while the audience ripples with titters and nudges and here and there a stage whisper of the name "Leavis"; those bygone days of Oxbridge controversy! ah, there were giants in the land!):

In the *Two Cultures* lecture there was a curious and culpable omission. It is that for which I can acknowledge the guilt now. I was talking about world crises: and I made only the slightest of references to the growth of population. That wasn't out of ignorance. I knew the facts. It wasn't out of carelessness. It was deliberate. I didn't want this major problem to dominate the discussion. Partly because it seemed to me then to make social hope even more difficult: partly because I didn't want to hurt other people's religious sensibilities. The religious sensibilities of people whom I knew, respected and often loved; and of others whom I didn't know. I now believe that I was dead wrong, and seriously wrong on both counts. First, any social hope that is going to be any use against the darkness ahead will have to be based upon a knowledge of the worst: the worst of the practical facts, the worst in ourselves. It will have to be a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> harsh and difficult hope. We have never needed it more. Second, the situation is so grave that sensibilities of any kind, any of ours, any of those we respect but disagree with, have to take their chance. We are dealing with the species-life. That responsibility has to take first place.

Like Mme de Beauvoir, Snow is hard-headed and offers us hardly more than a hushed hope of harsh happiness. The man is all heart (exactly *how* often did he love those religious friends of his?), and it's an awful jolt when he comes right out in public with his most private feelings about the end of the world if not worse: "I have to say that I have been nearer to despair this year, 1968, than ever in my life."

If only Snow had asked Bucky Fuller, he would have been told to cheer up:

> The population explosion is a myth. As we industrialize, down goes the annual birth rate. If we survive [Fuller has a slight residual doubt, based on environmental pollution and the availability of doomsday weapons], by 1985, the whole world will be industrialized, and, as with the United States, and as with all Europe and Russia and Japan today, the birth rate will be dwindling, and the bulge in population will be recognized as accounted for exclusively by those who are living longer.
>
> When world realization of its unlimited wealth has been established there as yet will be room for the whole of humanity to stand indoors in greater New York City, with more room for each human than at an average cocktail party.

"Who would want to be stuck at the average New York cocktail party?" countered a wit who once heard Fuller use this image. For the benefit of such cynics, Stravinsky's remark about Artur Rubinstein is apropos: "He really *likes* to play the piano." Fuller is an enthusiast, a dilettante, an amateur, he really *likes* parties and other human convergences—

> We will oscillate progressively between social concentrations in cultural centers and in multi-deployment in greater areas of our Spaceship Earth's as yet very ample accommodations. The same humans will increasingly converge for metaphysical intercourse and deploy for physical experiences.

—he may be the only designer and engineer with workable ideas for attractive and inexpensive mass-producible small- and large-scale dwelling structures (his almost infinitely adaptable geodesic dome, for example); he wouldn't bother punctuating one of his marathon statements with an answer to a wisecrack that assumes the contemptibleness of talk, cities, and huge aggregations of people.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fuller contends that the root of all evil is specialization. He tells a wonderful fable (which he appears to believe, and which at any rate makes more sense than history does) about the "Great Pirates," the arch-generalists who had a monopoly of comprehensive knowledge, ran the world for centuries through their puppet-kings, and were responsible for our specialist-bedeviled schools and the notion that there isn't enough to go round:

> They were world men, and they ran the world with ruthless and brilliant pragmatism based on the mis-seemingly "fundamental" information of their scientifically specialized servants. First came their Royal Society scientific servants, with their "Great" Second Law of thermodynamics, whose "entropy" showed that every energy machine kept losing energy and eventually "ran down." In their pre-speed-of-light-measurement misconceptioning of an omni-simultaneous—*"instant universe"*—that universe, as an energy machine, was thought also to be "running down." And thus the energy wealth and life support were erroneously thought to be in continuous depletion—originating the misconception of "spending."

Malthus and Darwin took their own specialist turns in confirming this dismal prospect; and:

> Then we have the great pragmatic ideologist Marx running into that entropic-Malthusian-Darwinian information and saying, "Well, the workers who produce things are the fittest because they are the only ones who know how to physically produce and therefore they ought to be the ones to survive." That was the beginning of the great "class warfare." All of the ideologies range somewhere between the Great Pirates and the Marxists. But all of them assume that there is not enough to go around.

But in fact there is: ". . . in this century alone we have gone from less than 1 per cent of humanity being able to survive in any important kind of health and comfort to 44 per cent of humanity surviving at a standard of living unexperienced or undreamed of before." By 1969,

> . . . 99.9 per cent of the accelerating accelerations of the physical environment changes effecting all humanity's evolution are transpiring in the realms of the electromagnetic spectrum realities which are undetectable directly by the human senses. Because they are gestating invisibly it is approximately impossible for world society to comprehend that the changes in the next thirty-five years—ushering in the twenty-first century—will be far greater than in our just completed century and one-half since the first United States economic census [in 1810]. We are engulfed in an invisible tidal wave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which, as it draws away, will leave humanity, if it survives, cast up upon an island of universal success uncomprehending how it has all happened.

Even the industrial world wars of our century have contributed to our true wealth:

> . . . in the progressive acquisition of instruments and tools which produce the ever more effective complex of industrial tools, the number of special purpose tools that made the end-product armaments and ammunition was negligible in comparison with the redirectable productivity of the majority of the general-purpose tools that constituted the synergistic tool complex. Second, the wars destroyed the obsolete tool-enclosing brick-and-wood structures whose factual availability, despite their obsolescence, had persuaded their owners to over extend the structures' usefulness and exploitability. This drive to keep milking the old proven cow not risking the production of new cows had blocked the acquisition of up-to-date tools. Third, there was the synergetic surprise of alternative or "substitute" technologies which were developed to bypass destroyed facilities. The latter often proved to be more efficient than the tools that were destroyed. Fourth, the metals themselves not only were not destroyed but were acceleratingly reinvested in new, vastly higher-performance per pound tools. It was thus that the world war losers such as Germany and Japan became overnight the postwar industrial winners. Their success documented the fallacy of the whole economic evaluation system now extant.

At this point, no doubt, many in Fuller's audience (Susan Sontag, for instance, or George Steiner) will be storming out, or muttering about the problem of evil and the unplumbable abysses of human nature; to which Fuller's genial response on at least one public occasion was: "I'm not an evangelist. I gave up long ago telling people what to do. I just try to make it easier for them to do whatever they want to do." Nobody is more infuriating to deep thinkers than an optimist who has facts and arguments and a lifetime of inventions and discoveries to back him up. Fuller doesn't talk about good and evil, he talks about the silliness of work and scarcity and the immediate prospect of abundance and leisure. "Evolution is apparently intent that man fulfill a much greater destiny than that of being a simple muscle and reflex machine—a slave automaton—*automation* displaces the *automatons*":

> Our labor world and all salaried workers, including school teachers and college professors, are now . . . afraid that automation will take away their jobs. They are afraid they won't be able to do what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is called "earning a living," which is short for earning the right to live. . . .

. . . To take advantage of the fabulous magnitudes of real wealth waiting to be employed intelligently by humans and unblock automation's postponement by organized labor we must give each human who is or becomes unemployed a life fellowship in research and development or in just simple thinking. Man must be able to dare to think truthfully and to act accordingly without fear of losing his franchise to live. The use of mind fellowships will permit humans comprehensively to expand and accelerate scientific exploration and experimental prototype development. For every 100,000 employed in research and development, or just plain thinking, one probably will make a breakthrough that will more than pay for the other 99,999 fellowships. Thus production will no longer be impeded by humans trying to do what machines can do better. . . . Given their research and development fellowship, many who have been frustrated during their younger years may feel like going fishing. Fishing provides an excellent opportunity to think clearly; to review one's life; to recall one's earlier frustrated and abandoned longings and curiosities. What we want everybody to do is to *think* clearly.

Anybody who has tried to stay afloat through four to six hours of one of Fuller's oceanic public monologues will know how much slyness and benignity shine through the shameless and expressive mad-scientist jargon, which for no reason at all will occasionally modulate into something more direct, like that hymn to fishing, or like this:

When we approach our problems on a universal, general systems basis and progressively eliminate the irrelevancies, somewhat as we peel petals from an artichoke, at each move we leave in full visibility the next most important layer of factors with which we must deal. We gradually uncover *you* and *me* in the heart of now. . . .

Fuller calls himself a "comprehensive anticipatory design scientist." He has invented a new mathematics, or discovered the true mathematics of nature. He is making an inventory of the world's resources to persuade mankind to accept a new definition of wealth. He has invented structures which are completely practicable for housing the individual houseless poor everywhere as well as for canopying and climate-controlling the city of New York. He is a kind of Great Pirate himself, he fires off barrages of outrageous proposals that might just possibly throw the politicians off balance long enough to allow worldman to pop out of the cocoons of all the sovereign states, he is brisk and dauntless and he delights in unconsidered facts:

I travel between Southern and Northern hemispheres and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around the world so frequently that I no longer have any so-called normal winter and summer, nor normal night and day, for I fly in and out of the shaded or sun-flooded areas of the spinning, orbiting Earth with ever-increased frequency. I wear three watches to tell me what time it is at my "home" office, so that I can call them by long distance telephone. One is set for the time of day in the place to which I am next going, and one is set temporarily for the locality in which I happen to be. I now see the earth realistically as a sphere and think of it as a spaceship. It is big, but it is comprehensible. I no longer think in terms of "weeks" except as I stumble over their antiquated stop-and-go habits. Nature has no "weeks." Quite clearly the peak traffic patterns exploited by businessmen who are eager to make the most profit in order to prove their right to live cause everybody to go in and out of the airport during two short moments in the twenty-four hours with all the main facilities shut down two-thirds of the time. All our beds around the world are empty for two-thirds of the time. Our living rooms are empty seven-eighths of the time.

Those three watches! Sir Francis Drake off to see the world while Shakespeare sits in London brooding about maidenheads and dynastic succession. Out there in the wild Bermudas might be beds and sofas occupied in shifts, new kinds of time and energy, things undreamed of besides monsters and airy spirits.

Sculpture by Arp/Giacometti/Maillol/Miro/Moore/Picasso/Rodin
Drawings by Degas/Giacometti/Matisse/Miro/Moore/Picasso
Fall Catalog One Dollar

JAMES GOODMAN
GALLERY

55 East 86 Street/New York, N.Y./By Appointment Only (212)427-8383

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS FROM DAVID LEWIS
1969–1970

"Now I'm going back to the first principles, weed out our entire list and from now on publish only fine worthwhile books." Horace Liveright

David Lewis agrees with Horace Liveright and the principle of publishing books of quality is one on which we are building. We hope that our books will be a tribute to that principle.

ROBERT LOWELL: *A Portrait of the Artist in His Time*
Edited by Robert Boyers and Michael London
A critical survey of the works of America's foremost contemporary poet which includes essays by Randall Jarrell, Norman Mailer and Robert Bly and a complete Checklist of Materials on Robert Lowell 1939-1969 by Jerome Mazzaro. $12.50

EDMUND WILSON:
A Bibliography
by David Ramsay
This important work continues the series of bibliographies under the editorship of Prof. T. D. Young of Vanderbilt University that includes Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate. $12.50

HORACE LIVERIGHT: *Publisher of the Twenties*
by Frank W. Gilmer
The story of a courageous publisher and the house that bore his name. $8.95

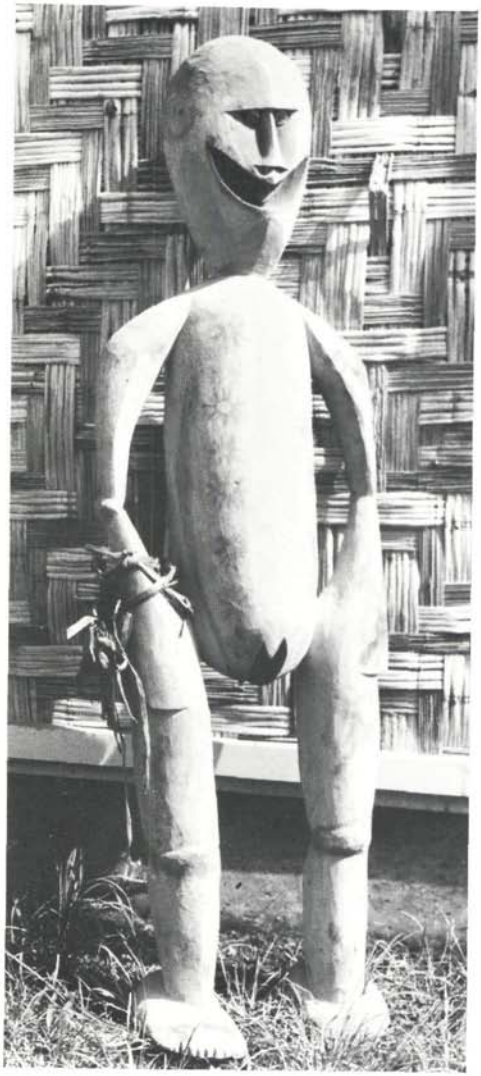
AMERICAN WAR NARRATIVES 1917-1918:
A Study and Bibliography
by Charles V. Genthe
An examination of the spirit in which American soldiers viewed the Great War as reflected by their journals and diaries. $10.00

THE EXILE OF JAMES JOYCE
by Hélène Cixous
Translated from the French by Sally Purcell. This study of James Joyce will be a monumental contribution to the Joyce canon.

David Lewis Publisher, Inc.
216 WEST 89th STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10024

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

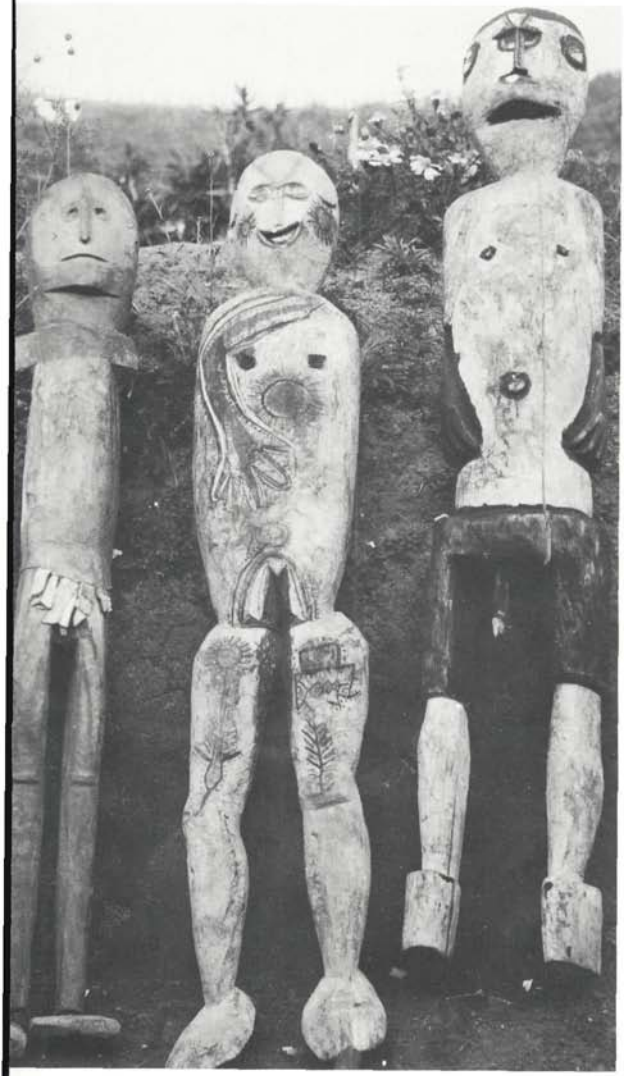
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Sculpture by WANAMERA

Sculpture by WANAMERA

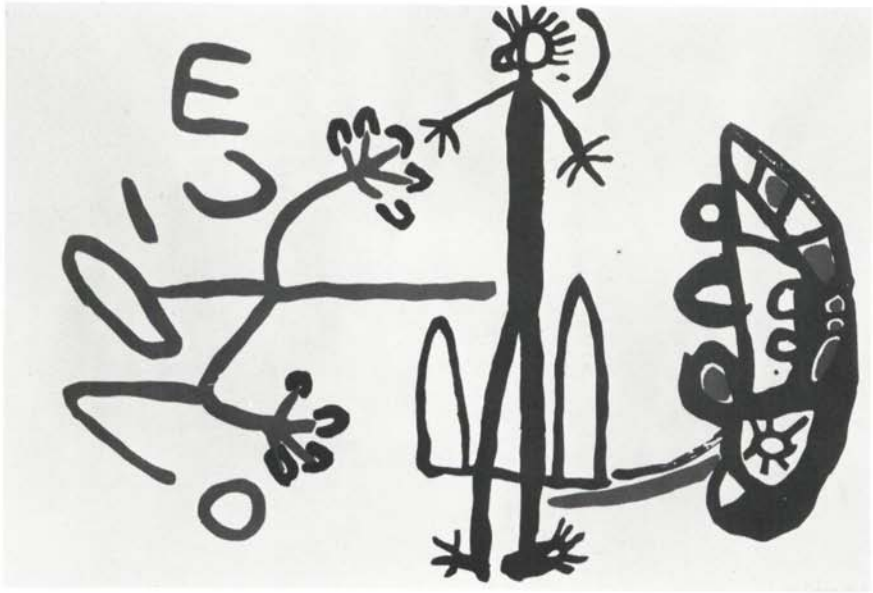
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



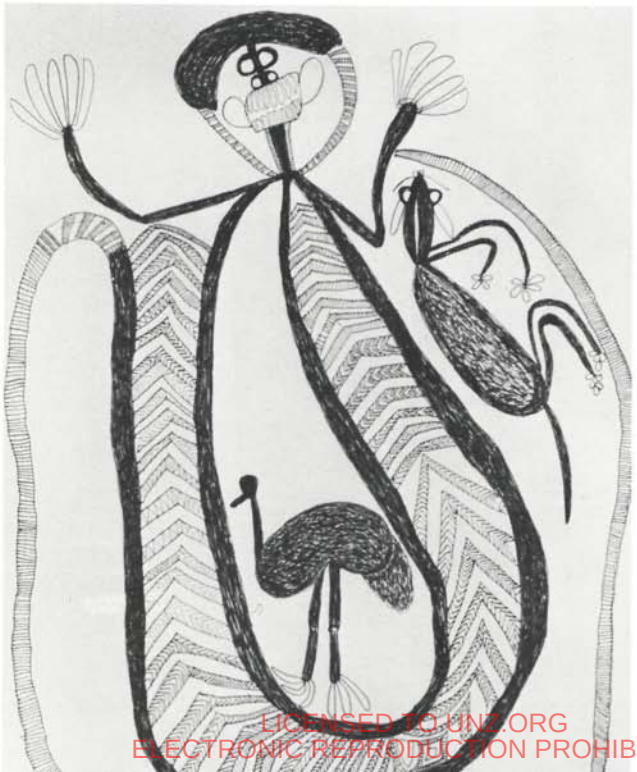
ıre by WANAMERA

Electric Shock by TIABE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Moto Bugerup (Car Smash) by TIABE



Sinek silip istap; orait wanpela rat em silip antap, orait wanpela pikinini muruk silip. (The snake is sleep-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED